



NOW THEN.

SQUINK. GEORGE MONBIOT. PORTICO QUARTET.
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NOW THEN IS A FREE MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR PEOPLE IN SHEFFIELD.

We aim to cultivate choice, voice and responsibility by providing a platform for independent art, trade, music, writing and local news. We support Sheffield's economy by only working with independent traders, community groups, charities and local government.

Almost all articles published in this magazine are written by members of the community, not professionals. If you don't like what you read or have something that needs to be said, get in touch. Your opinions make Now Then what it is.

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Enjoy the read.

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EDITORIAL.

Another local art feature for you this month. Squink lives and works just outside Sheffield and is best known for his custom Dunny action figurines, which he is able to inject with a stunning amount of personality for a three-inch chunk of vinyl. Personally, I can't get enough of his paintings either. Both are on show here for your salivation.

After a hiatus of some months, Doug Pyper has written us a piece about Wikileaks and the Communist Party of China. You might remember his Democracy Dies Behind Closed Doors article or, even further back, his piece about cannabis reclassification. A great writer and we're happy to have him back.

We also have part two of our interview with award-winning journalist George Monbiot, which is well worth a read if you want to get up to speed with the impending cuts and what you can do to oppose them. With that in mind – get down to the protests against the Lib-Dems in the city centre on 11th & 12th March.

SAM.

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Rage against the lib dems

Called by Right To Work

sheffield.right.to.work@gmail.com // www.righttowork.org.uk

The lib dems are hosting their
conference at the city hall
in Sheffield.

Let them
hear our voice.



Saturday 12th March
Assemble at 11am
Devonshire Green

LOCALCHECK.

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS.

HOSTED BY ALT-SHEFF.



DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS WAS A FORM OF TORTURE IN PRE-COMMUNIST CHINA, A SLOW AND LINGERING DEATH THAT COMES TO MIND AS THINGS LIKE NURSING HOMES AND SOCIAL SERVICES DISAPPEAR, AS CHUNKS OF THE NHS ARE PRIVATISED, AS SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS CLOSE. VITAL PARTS OF PEOPLE'S LIVES, GONE FOREVER. IN SHEFFIELD AND ACROSS THE UK, ANTI-CUTS PROTESTS ARE GATHERING STEAM. ON 12TH MARCH THE LIB DEMS' CONFERENCE WILL BE A FOCUS IN SHEFFIELD, THEN ON THE 26TH A MASSIVE DEMONSTRATION IN LONDON MAY BE THE BIGGEST IN DECADES, AND MANY SHEFFIELDERS WILL BE ON THE COACHES TO JOIN IN THE REVOLT.

It's easy to spot how it's affecting us, the 'little people', but maybe in opposing each little cut we're missing the full picture? There are 'big people' as well, and they haven't suffered at all over recent years. There are 400 rich individuals who earn as much as the poorest 10% of the people of the world, according to Sheffield Equality Group. Massive wealth, accumulated in fewer hands. This has been the pattern, the trend, since the 70s. Why since then? Well, a school of thought appeared in the USA that proposed cutting back tax and government-run services to near nothing, and it was tried out first under Chile's vicious military coup. Chile became a haven for corporations and the elites, and unemployment soared. It is now one of the world's most divided nations. Sounds familiar? In her influential book *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein describes this 'disaster capitalism' repeatedly used to prey on working people, enriching the rich. Crisis, war, disaster - each time used as an opportunity, from Iraq to Hurricane Katrina, from Thatcher's unemployment to the African debt crisis. The right-wing attack makes a small problem into a major crisis, with ulterior motives. Cutbacks and deteriorating living conditions force a disaster to happen. UK debt is no bigger than it has been in the past, but watch how we're being told it is.

The pattern was sold to government after government, but who was behind it? Some recent revelations by George Monbiot in the *Guardian* (8th February) give a big clue. Moves to 'reform' UK tax are run by working groups entirely and blatantly staffed by corporate executives. Surprise, surprise. They are planning a mega tax cut for large companies by allowing multinationals' foreign activities to no longer be partly taxed here. Who will benefit? Rich shareholders. Why wasn't this in the manifesto? The consultation events are now closed - they were just before and just after Christmas. How convenient. A new book by Nicholas Shaxson, *Treasure Islands: Tax Havens and the Men Who Stole the World* explains what's going on. If you thought tax havens were being closed, think again. They're not just shady loopholes for a few dodgy businessmen - they are the system itself.

Having just been to South America, I was struck by the complete absence of recession. Very popular left-wing governments are in power across the continent. Programmes for 'the people' are mopping up social problems like hunger and homelessness. Economies are booming. They rarely mention 'the 2009 recession', or the 'US/European crisis'. We are so insular here we don't realise what's going on. We tend to think there's a world recession, but there simply is not. Instead, the worldwide elites have a global vision and self-interest at heart, certainly not any particular 'national interest'. This time the social improvements of the 'developed' West are in their sights, and 'un-development' is the plan. Those who remember the fundamental change before and after the pro-business Thatcher government will know how a nasty sink-or-swim atmosphere entered British society. It's back. That means it's time to wake up and protest, Egypt-style. And to watch out, because things look set to get a lot worse.

Read part 2 of our interview with George Monbiot on page 10.

ALT-SHEFF.ORG.UK



One off custom painted Dunnys by Squink. Dunny and other KidRobot DIY vinyl figures are © KidRobot - kidrobot.com



LIBRARIES.

CULTURAL VANDALISM.

MIKEY SMITH.

“That there should one Man die ignorant who had capacity for Knowledge, this I call a tragedy, were it to happen more than twenty times in the minute, as by some computations it does.”

Thomas Carlyle - Inscribed above the entrance to Highfield Library, London Road, Sheffield.

In what has been described as an act of cultural vandalism, Doncaster Council has announced it is to cease funding for 14 of the borough's 26 public libraries. Sheffield City Council has not revealed the details of its budget, and won't be drawn on plans to close the city's libraries, but with fewer than expected Town Hall redundancies, and an £80m budget gap to fill, something may well have to give.

You may ask, “So what if half of the libraries close? I can't remember the last time I got a book out of a public library, and I don't mind hopping on a bus next time I fancy a Dan Brown.” it's a fair question, which deserves answering.

For starters, the last time you borrowed one was probably when you were very young, and the next will in all likelihood be when you're very old, two demographics not renowned for their ability to travel particularly easily (and stop reading Dan Brown's books, you'll only encourage him). But convenience is not the only reason to get upset over library closures, and the Council know this.

Poet Ian McMillan, known as the Bard of Barnsley, and a staunch defender of public libraries, said recently, “Libraries are a vital and irreplaceable part of a cultured and civilised society, and one of the few public places left where you don't have to pay to get in.”

Every political party who have ever had so much as a sniff of power has wanted to be considered the party of aspiration, the party that enabled people to make something better of themselves, and that's something libraries do really well. Not only that, but these days they're not just big rooms full of books - they're full blown community centres, giving some of the most isolated in society a place to make connections and build friendships. Odd that a government so obsessed with building links in society would allow libraries to be anywhere near anyone's list of things to cut.

The tin-foil-hat approach to this conundrum is to suggest that the government are fine with library closures, because the more ignorant the populace, the more they can get away with. Indeed, one of the original objections to the 1850 Public Libraries and Museums act was a fear that libraries would become working class “lecture halls...which would give rise to an unhealthy agitation”.

Around late January, word reached me that a children's creative writing workshop planned for Upperthorpe Library to be led by McMillan had been kiboshed by the council for fear that it might get 'political'. Library Workers for a Brighter Future, a group set up to celebrate libraries and oppose funding cuts, was in the process of organising the event when the council refused them permission to hold it in a public library.

The council later clarified that it would have been 'inappropriate' to hold such an event in a library. One wonders where they would consider an appropriate venue for a Save Our Libraries event, and what they were afraid the kids might learn from Ian McMillan.

I'm often asked what I would cut instead of libraries. Perhaps I'd rather see fewer bobbies on the beat, an increase in primary school class sizes, or most emotive of all, nurses given the sack. The answer is, of course, none of these. And if that seems a fatuous answer, then you too have drunk George Osborne's “there is no alternative” Kool-Aid.

Of course there's an alternative. Last month, President Obama used his second State of the Union speech to outline his plan for America to invest its way out of the downturn. They'll be investing in infrastructure, in technology, and most importantly, investing in education, and so in the future workers, thinkers and innovators of the next generation.

The UK, on the other hand, has chosen a different country on which to base its route out of recession. In 2006, George Osborne wrote in The Times, describing that country as “as a shining example of the art of the possible in long-term economic policymaking....They have much to teach us, if only we are willing to learn.”

Which country was he speaking of? Ireland. And we all know what happened there.

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Festival of Contemporary Metal
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Leaf vessel by Chris Knight



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WIKILEAKS.

ONE IN THE EYE FOR LIES.

DOUG PYPER.

I remember vividly the day the US embassy cables story broke. I'd just arrived at work and checked The Guardian website.

I live in Shanghai and had for some time since leaving England secretly hoped I'd stumble across a news story of such global proportions. China is bereft of free press, you see, and I wanted to witness the contrast with English media. My experience was similar, apart from the absence of TV bombardment, mainly because if you want news, read English and have an internet connection, you can find it. But then I wondered; what if I only read Chinese?

The following week I was due to help colleagues with their English. I like to have a discussion topic for these lessons. As a slightly subversive (as China goes) experiment I began by holding up a picture of Julian Assange. "Do you know who this is?" I asked. In a room full of people, several of whom had postgraduate degrees from European universities, nobody did. "Have you heard of Wikileaks?" Blank faces. I proceeded to explain and, though the story had dominated global media for the past week, it became evident that this was the first my colleagues had heard of it.

This absence of awareness goes to the nub of the Wikileaks controversy, and the Chinese context lends it a perspective not easily obtained elsewhere. Assange has compelled us to question the validity of state secrecy as a precondition of effective governance, and if an antithesis to Assange's argument is found anywhere, it is in the recent successes of the secretive Communist Party of China (CPC).

Though the practices of the CPC run counter to those Enlightenment values held dear by the liberally inclined, they have produced many unquestionable benefits for the country. The statistics are staggering - over 400 million lifted from poverty since 1980, a decrease by over 40% in the infant mortality rate since 1990, a high equivalent decline in maternal mortality and an economy growing at roughly 10% per annum. Could this have been achieved if a culture of accountability prevailed in China, similar to that which prevails in the West? Would greater transparency render more, or less, efficient the architecture of governance in a nation of 1.3 billion? These questions phrased in the mind of the liberal often yield emotive analysis, and Western media betrays this to us regularly with its stock critique of the CPC, but objectively, they are difficult to answer. Yet difficult or not, Assange has forced us to reflect on them, to weigh in the balance the relative merits of secrecy and transparency.

In 2006 Assange wrote a blog post entitled 'The non linear effects of leaks on unjust systems of governance'. It warrants quotation at length:

"The more secretive or unjust an organization is, the more leaks induce fear and paranoia in its leadership and planning coterie. This must result in minimization of efficient internal communications mechanisms (an increase in cognitive "secrecy tax") and consequent system-wide cognitive decline resulting in decreased ability to hold onto power as the environment demands adaption.

"Hence in a world where leaking is easy, secretive or unjust systems are nonlinearly hit relative to open, just systems. Since unjust systems by their nature induce opponents, and in many places barely have the upper hand, mass leaking leaves them exquisitely vulnerable to those who seek to replace them with more open forms of governance."

This is, as Julian Assange sees it, Wikileaks' raison d'être. It presupposes that secrecy burdens the agility of organisations more than transparency. Perhaps, though, the accountability consequent upon transparency levies its own burden on agility? Moreover, the passage unequivocally characterises secretive systems as unjust and open systems as just, yet it is clearly arguable that governments may justly hold some secrets.

I am to an extent playing devil's advocate here; having written an article in Now Then #18 entitled Democracy Dies Behind Closed Doors, you can probably guess my proclivities. But these questions do warrant thoughtful reflection. The point is, Assange has forced the analysis and that is, quite simply, a brilliant coup.

Whatever the answer to the above questions, one thing is clear; Wikileaks is totemic of an epochal shift in power over the flow of information. As Jeff Jarvis - journalist, professor at City University of New York and founder of Entertainment Weekly - has observed: "It used to be that he or she who held secrets held power...Now he or she who creates transparency holds power."

This brings me to my central contention, and it hangs on the nature and value of privacy; a concept so core to us as individuals that we enshrine it in manifold human rights instruments. Its importance stems from our nature as individual agents who seek to control our identities through the information we reveal to, and withhold from, the outside world. Now, apply that same logic to government and we begin to see that governments control their identities through the use of privacy in the very same way that we do.

Though ostensibly mandated by the people, governments control their identities through revealing and withholding information to and from the people according to their dictate, not ours. In a democracy this gives lie to the notion that we elect those best suited to govern; rather, all too often, we elect those best able to attune the control of their identity so as to resonate with the electorate. Wikileaks and its fast proliferating imitators are ceding this control away from the governing class and towards the people. In an optimistic view, this gives us a fresh opportunity to consider what should and should not be kept from us, taking into account the successes of more secretive organisations like the CPC, and weighing these against our system of values. Ultimately, it allows us to play a larger role in the shaping of our government's identity.

Despite the unanswered questions, luminaries like Assange and heroes like Bradley Manning have invigorated our enfranchisement. As Assange wrote in a 2006 essay entitled Conspiracy as Governance: "We must develop a way of thinking about this structure that is strong enough to carry us through the mire of competing political moralities and into a position of clarity."

(Incidentally, all the transparency in the world can't stop a duplicitous U-turn on manifesto commitments, can it Clegg? You lying scumbag).



GEORGE MONBIOT.

CONTINUED FROM NOW THEN #35.

INTERVIEW BY SARA HILL.

Welcome to Part 2 of our interview with award-winning investigative journalist George Monbiot. In Part 1 (which you can read at nowthenmagazine.com if you missed it) the focus was on the man himself, the media and public access to independent information.

In Part 2 we move to discussing the ‘Big Society’, economics, politics, and what we can all do about it. Always intelligent and informed, whatever your opinion we’re certain you’ll find George Monbiot’s an extremely thought provoking read. So, if you’re seated comfortably...

What do you see as the core principles of David Cameron's Big Society?

‘Big Society’ is one of those phrases which is a bit like ‘Care in the Community’, in that it says the opposite of what the government is actually doing. Care in the Community was Thatcher’s way of dumping mentally ill people on local authorities without proper support - a complete absence of both care and community. In Cameron’s case, what he’s saying is the state doesn’t have to engage as much in welfare, health and education because voluntary bodies can take up the slack. Yet at the same time, the money available for voluntary bodies is being greatly cut, both by government and as a result of the economic downturn. He’s effectively throwing vulnerable people into the voluntary sector, just as these resources are shrinking drastically. The Big Society is just a PR-friendly way of saying, “We are no longer going to take responsibility for those who need help. If they sink, that’s tough. We’re the Conservatives and we don’t do welfare”. Don’t forget that Cameron’s background is as a PR man. That’s his expertise and he’s very good at it. He knows how to sell a completely unacceptable set of policies as if they were something positive.

Would you say that, particularly since New Labour, this PR heavy, somewhat Americanised form of politics is becoming more prevalent in Britain?

Blair was also a specialist in this stuff and he, as well as the people around him like Mandelson and Campbell, were extremely clever at manipulating public perceptions and opinions. To the extent that, after a while, all that really counted was perception rather than policy. Then the only policies which were allowed to pass were the ones that did not interfere with the perception of New Labour as a party that was friendly towards both business and the people. So effectively, policy was retrospectively fitted around presentation, whereas what we’re told happens is that presentation occurs only once you’ve got the policy. It is the reversal of that relationship between policy and presentation that has mortally wounded democracy in Britain.

By replacing political substance with political presentation, at the same time as destroying any substantial policy differences between Labour and Conservatives in a lot of policy areas, Blair destroyed hope. He destroyed people’s expectation that they could have something better from politics. Alongside the Iraq War, I see that as Blair’s great crime. It ensured that a very large number of people felt there was no point in voting and it’s that political disenfranchisement and disillusionment that Blair presided over which is his lasting legacy. It will take a long time to heal, especially since he’s been replaced by someone very much like him.

You’ve defined the UK spending cuts as a symptom of ‘disaster capitalism’. Can you elaborate on that theory for our readers?

The idea is that those who want to shrink the state - in order to reduce taxes for the richest people in society and create a system governed by market fundamentalism, which ensures there is no restraint on corporate money-making activities or the wealth and actions of billionaires - have a pre-existing agenda which cannot be implemented until there’s an economic crisis. When such a crisis comes along, they say we must shrink the state in order to save the economy. But it’s not about saving the economy; it’s to fit their ideological requirements. An economic crisis is the best thing that can happen for them as they wouldn’t be able to implement these sorts of cuts in any other circumstance. Naomi Klein coined the phrases ‘disaster capitalism’ and ‘shock doctrine’ and showed how this has happened again and again around the world in different governments.

What’s going on in the UK is no different. It’s been a long-standing Conservative agenda. All these crocodile tears about how hard they are finding it to make these cuts and that “we’re all in this together”. It’s complete nonsense. The worse the economic crisis, the more cuts they can make and the closer they come to bringing about that pure, idealised world they want, with no state interference in the money-making activities of big business.

Where is the radical left in all of this? There doesn’t seem to have been a coherent campaign against these actions.

It has been very slow, but there have been some good campaigns. I’m very impressed by [tax avoidance campaign] UK Uncut, as they’re doing a great job of taking the battle to the enemy in exactly the way it should be done. Some of the students have been very good too, particularly the way in which they’ve broadened the campaign from tuition fees towards other issues which students weren’t that interested in in the past, like the treatment of university staff. They’ve become involved in political issues outside the usual student concern and that’s what we need to see.

At the moment it is still slow and muted, but that’s another aspect of the shock doctrine. [American economist] Milton Freidman spelt it out very clearly, as Naomi Klein shows - he said you’ve got six to nine months to hit people with everything and make them so punch-drunk that they cannot respond in time. Even former members of the Monetary Policy Committee have pointed out that there’s no need to be going so far or so fast with these cuts. There’s a strong political reason, which is that throwing everything at us at once makes us politically ineffective, because we lack the resources to respond and are taken by surprise. By the time we do respond, it is likely to be too late.

Given the apparent failure of protests against the Iraq War, for example, is that form of protest no longer an effective tool?

No, I wouldn’t say that. What we were up against there was a government which was peculiarly fixated on a policy which wild horses could not have persuaded it to drop. That was solely because Blair was so obsessed with appeasing the United States and trying to acquire some of its power by standing on its shoulders that it was almost as if he was a man possessed. I don’t think that anything short of a coup could have prevented the Iraq War from taking place, so don’t draw too wide a conclusion from our failure to prevent it. We were up against a peculiar man, doing a peculiar thing in a very peculiar psychological space.

So do you think protest is still an effective method of reform?

It’s the only effective method we have. What would the other side like us to do? It would like us to give up because we thought we weren’t effective. That’s the message that is constantly propounded by the Daily Mail and the Telegraph and the like. They want us to conclude that protest is a waste of time. What we should therefore conclude is that protest is anything but, because if they don’t want us to do it then there must be a good reason for that.

Although the radical left appears fragmented, the radical right, especially in the US, seems incredibly organised. How have they managed this?

First of all - money. There’s been a great deal of cash poured into the radical right by people like David and Charles Koch, who have pumped hundreds of millions of dollars into it. That enables them to hire professional organisers and the best public relations money can buy. They are also pushing on an open door as far as much of the media is concerned, particularly Fox News and similar outlets, so they have a ready-made echo chamber. This helps generate popular movements, because you’re constantly hearing in the mainstream media, “you’ve got to get out there, you are the people that must remake America”, and a lot of people hear that and believe it. What we are up against [on the left] is the exact opposite, where we’re constantly being told by the popular media, “You people are scum, go back to your houses and stop messing about.”

So they have that great advantage, but there’s also a weird phenomenon, which I’ve noticed on both sides of the Atlantic, whereby the left claims to be in favour of solidarity and collective action and yet is generally composed of the most extreme individualists you’re every likely to meet. The right claims to be in favour of extreme individualism and yet they go around like a bunch of herd animals and would follow a bucket on a broomstick if it had the right label stuck to it. It’s a strange political paradox, where both sides say the opposite of what they do.

We do tend on the left to be too egocentric and I’ve noticed that since the old class politics of solidarity have gone, what’s replaced them is this egocentric politics of a hundred people, each with their own plan, instead of people working towards a common goal. Left-wing politics seems in some circles now to be a competition to impose your views and we need to do much better than that. We need a much stronger sense of collective action and meeting each other half way in order to campaign more effectively. We need to find a way of acting together.

Any ideas on the best way to do that?

[Laughs] There’s no magic formula! Unfortunately, you can’t say, “If we walk three times widdershins around the Trade Union Congress, it’ll work.” It needs a lot of hard work, a lot of negotiations in now smokeless rooms and a lot of preparedness to compromise and act together. It’s possible that the tough and unpleasant times we’re about to go into will pull people together, but they might push people apart, so we have to have some good strategic thinkers begin to work out the best way of ensuring we regain that solidarity and collective action out of this crisis, rather than further atomisation. I am not one of those strategic thinkers. I’m okay at the theoretical stuff and pulling together the research, analysing what’s happening and working out in broad terms what need to happen. As far as actual negotiations go, that’s not one of my strengths, so I’m not the person to ask about the mechanics of how that should best be done.

Last year, we interviewed Tony Benn and asked him how he’d managed to avoid cynicism and stay so positive throughout his career. How have you managed this?

Well, I’d like to point out to your readers that my career hasn’t been quite as long as Tony Benn’s! He is a wonderful inspiration and an example to all of us of how to keep going despite everything. I think what keeps me going is probably the same as what keeps him going, which is the spirit of other people, the support you get from others and also the sense that there are people prepared to make great sacrifices to do extraordinary things in the pursuit of what they believe to be right. That’s an inspiration which gets you through some very dark days - and we all have dark days. People with progressive politics have had a very rough time of it over the past 20 or 30 years, so you need that inspiration. The thing I fear most is other people’s cowardice and the thing that inspires me most is other people’s courage.

George Monbiot will appear at the Showroom on March 2nd.

**Read his articles at monbiot.com
Disaster capitalism explained - naomiklein.org/shock-doctrine
How to stop tax dodgers in their tracks - ukuncut.org.uk**

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LEARNING FOR THE FOURTH AGE.

NOURISHMENT FOR OLDER GENERATIONS.

BRENDAN MCFADDEN.

The young, active and virile among you have it all to look forward to. But as we get older, we inevitably slow down and our body clocks grind to a halt. As this natural progression dawns among us we expect the best care from those around us. The state provides the best it can for our needs with compulsory state pensions and care facilities. 450,000 people make up the numbers of our care home population, a huge number of individuals who are left to live out their days in what should be exemplary physical care. What is sometimes overlooked is that mandatory thirst for mental stimulation that is central to human nature.

If is an often neglected and unmentioned fact that the once active minds of our older generation are lacking this nourishment. The musicians, architects and sportsmen of days gone by can keep their treasured token memories of past success and happiness, but it can be left behind for a routine of TV, dinner and dominoes. This may seem a standard approach to the latter stages of life, but have we just been conditioned into believing this? What is needed is the same level of care that is given to our young children. The staff who work in your average home will often do as their title suggests and 'care', but that can sometimes only be on a physical level. It is an unfortunate situation, but bureaucratic and financial shackles wrapped around care homes mean that the residents don't get that beneficial one-on-one mental maintenance they need.

Luckily, Sheffield has its own answer to this imbalance in an initiative that is driven to shine a light into the lives of people like this. Learning for the Fourth Age is a new pioneering charity that tirelessly works to bring joy and fulfilment to our senior citizens with an inspiring effort from a team of volunteers who are funded on a non-profit basis. Their work in care homes in Sheffield is an inspiring beacon of promise that serves to change the economics of a senior person's lifestyle for the better. Volunteers head into the homes and complete activities with a resident. They give them a one-on-one mentoring service, encouraging and dually completing tasks with the residents. This can range from arts and crafts to learning a foreign language or an instrument.

A mentor assesses an individual's needs and provides them with all the assistance necessary for them to push forward. An artist who hasn't drawn in years due to ill health can expect an encouraging volunteer to sit and complete drawing exercises with them, and in time that person can continue his latest work with his newly found confidence, perhaps his first in 20 years. This is proven to produce a turnaround in the mental and physical wellbeing of residents, in some cases slowing the progression of dementia.

At a time when the cost of care facilities is rising dramatically, a charity like this makes a vital difference. The government's care home model says people who own more than £22,250 in property and savings must finance most of their care themselves. For this amount of cash, it is not farfetched to expect the sort of care Learning for the Fourth Age provides.




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MUZAK.

MUZAK IS DEAD, LONG LIVE MOOZIK.

EEX.

Regular readers will already be familiar with my opinions about the commodification of art and music, but even I am astounded by the continuing downward spiral that is popular music. The most vacuous and yet predictably appealing is the recently re-invented and regurgitated Jessie J. Although I can hardly deny the sheer sexual appeal of her perfectly styled and knowingly distorted pornstar looks, it's a major disappointment to see her video 'Do it Like a Dude', in which, despite having the compelling athleticism of an unencumbered 22-year-old, her desperate gyrations make her look like a misguided, krumping clown, wacked to kingdom-come on unfounded, cocaine-fuelled confidence. The track also has that synthetic, autotuned sound that makes you wonder if Jessie J was ever in a recording studio at all, or if she just turned up for the video shoot. Autotuning is the music production equivalent of MSG - theoretically it makes everything taste better, but you really shouldn't consume it.

To extend the irony, she performed an unplugged version of 'Do it Like a Dude' (singing live) at the Brit Awards 2011, accompanied by some earnest acoustic guitar player in an attempt to give her sub-literate bumpin' an' a-grindin' some artistic credibility. This performance would not be out of place on Smack the Pony or Big Train.

I can understand the commercial imperative, especially when you can find such an appealing object of desire who is readily pre-packaged for exploitation. If nothing else, the body stocking she wore to the Brit Awards will have me buying her videos on iTunes. I'll just have to turn the volume down so that her grotesque squawking doesn't put me off my rhythm.

Tellingly, her website has plenty of content, but hardly any music. It has links to all the necessary social media sites, publicity photos, behind-the-scenes videos, but 'music' is the seventh tab along and, as of January 2011, includes no songs at all, just links to where you can buy them. I did manage to find one live performance recorded on Jools Holland's Later. In this she almost looks like a music act, although I did have to trawl through the pantomime that is Dare Jessie J, where she invites 'fans' to dare her to do various carefully stage-managed publicity stunts.

No matter what might be claimed, it has nothing to do with music. Despite being voted Critic's Choice by the Brit Awards' panel of dimwits, a look at her website reveals that she has recorded a grand total of three tracks, and her aforementioned single has five (five, count 'em) remixes. However, I gather she has already established herself as a 'songwriting talent', providing by-the-numbers grunts and groans for such musical heavyweights as Justin Timberlake, Mylie Cyrus and Britney. Impressive.

Britney Spears' latest drowning-not-waving clutch at the straws of an insufficiently imagined idea of success is one of the ugliest excretions I have ever heard. Like so many of her singles, it pivots on a single punch-line, in this case: "Would you hold it against me?"

The Bellamy Brothers, writers of the universally famous "If I said you had a beautiful body, would you hold it against me?" quotation are very polite about the rape of their intellectual property, but it's not been a secret (for at least as long as the surprising length of Britney's lifetime) that a little controversy does neither party any harm, and so no wonder. I hardly think the faceless, indenti-shit songwriters that churn out Britney's miserable repertoire of wank-along hits were unaware of the Bellamy Brothers and, after all, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

And now Jessie J is to be one of them, having been invited to pen something for Slaphead Spears. I think I preferred it when songs for manufactured bands like Milli Vanilli, Boney M or Black Box were written by fat, middle-aged, white males. The idea of a beautiful, vampish dominatrix seems wrong and is only ameliorated by the fact that her songs, unlike theirs, are complete crap. It's a shame that such a genuinely talented performer as Jessie J has been so badly misled as to her writing ability. Unless, of course, it was by Lady Ga Ga, or maybe The Black Eyed Peas.

I wonder, if I said she had an ugly oeuvre would she keep it away from me?

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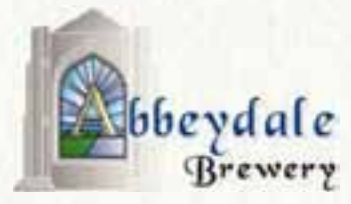
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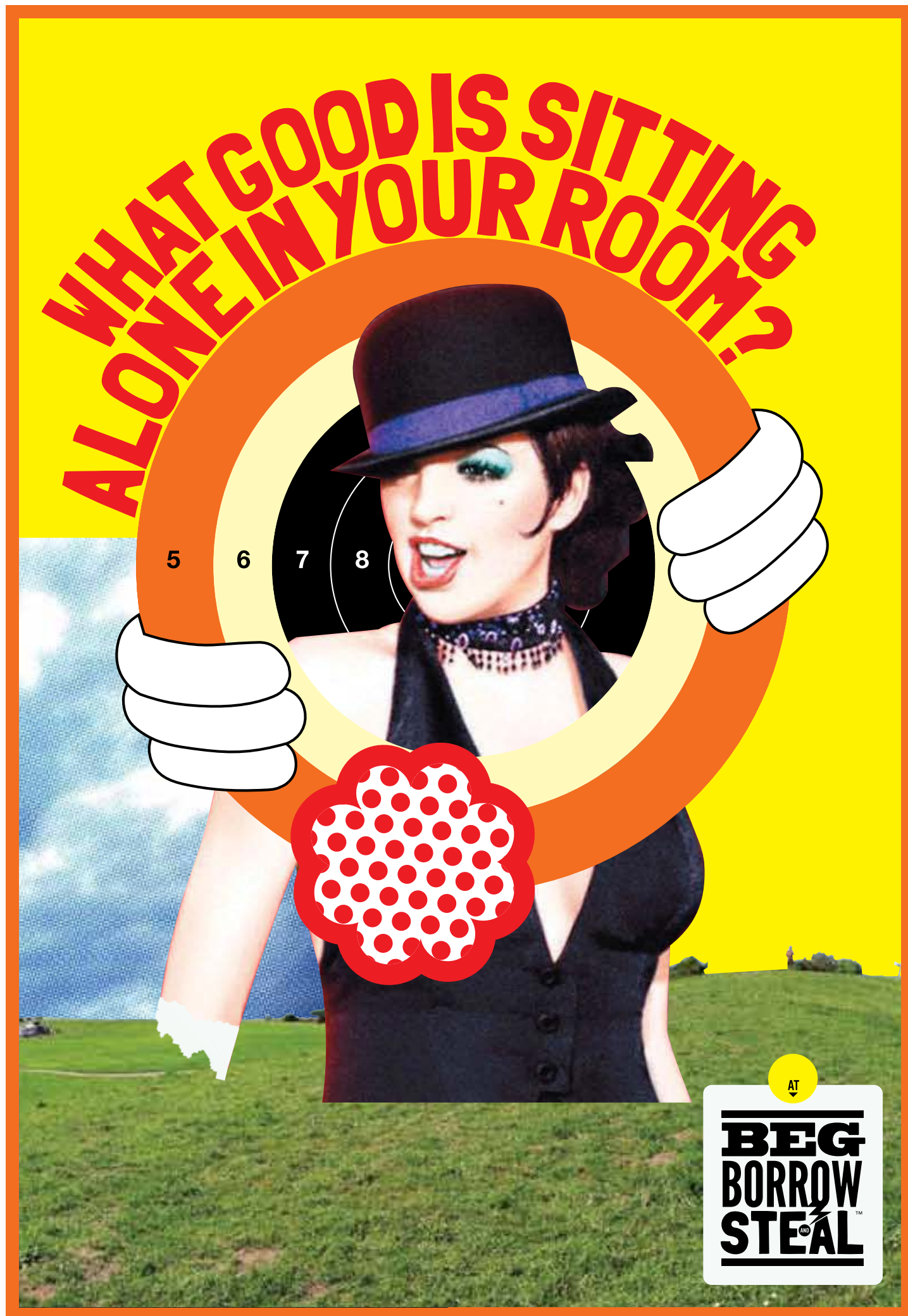
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KNOWLEDGE.

THE RISE OF THE LAYMAN.

TOM BELSHAW.



The internet is quite simply a glorious place. Where else can you find bootlegged music and films, questionable women, deep seated xenophobia and amusing cats all together in the same place? Granted, some areas of any town centre may offer you these pleasures, but there's not a chance of you getting away with browsing their wares in nothing but your pants.

Aside from being a stage for videos of people injuring themselves and filling cups, the web holds another, more beneficial purpose - it's a veritable treasure trove of information. The answers to practically any question the mind can conjure can be found in mere seconds. For example:

The standard seat height of your average dining room chair is 18-20 inches.

Karl Marx was definitely NOT gay with Friedrich Engels.

The Large Hadron Collider in Geneva has so far failed to destroy the world.

Having that kind of access to that much knowledge is a fantastic thing. Education is, after all the key to progression of self. But can you educate yourself without the aid of a teacher or specialist? Without the constraints of context, raw information serves as nothing more than a mildly interesting pub fact.

There was a time when people relied on the printed word for data consumption.

1988 saw the publication of a very important book for those wishing to delve a little deeper. Stephen Hawking's A Brief History of Time provided an insight into a world that many thought themselves too uneducated to comment upon. Although definitely not the first of its kind, a book about black holes, bizarre quantum level sorcery and the very origin of the universe explained by Cambridge University's Professor of Mathematics was enough to pique the interest of practically all and sundry. So much so that conversations about the latest goings on in Albert Square were replaced with ponderings regarding the metaphysical nature intrinsic to preventative observation of quarks and gluons.

The fact that Hawking's layman gospel has, to date, sold over ten million copies and spent 237 weeks on the bestseller's list is testament to the idea that people want to learn themselves up on some of those big league smarts. The reason he was so successful where others may have failed is that he was astutely aware of his audience, omitting all equations (bar that famous one that begins with 'E') in the knowledge that each would halve his readership. That didn't stop it from being bloody difficult to understand. Layman's terms equate to pure accessibility.

As of January 2011, there are 282 books in the Oxford University Press A Very Short Introduction range, with subjects as diverse as social and cultural anthropology, animal rights, existentialism and witchcraft. The Guardian published a slew of Introduction books with comic book illustrations, either for the inquisitive illiterate or children with a somewhat worrying interest in Nietzsche. Any scientist worth his or her salt now has a TV show with a tie-in publication.

Physics poster boy Brian Cox represents the next step - a hip young science buff, ex-keyboardist for pop group D:Ream with nice hair. The people who actively sought out their learning have been appeased. The hip young folk with nice hair like Brian's are an untapped resource. His epic show Wonders of the Solar System drew in over 2.8 million viewers for its first episode. The companion book sold in equal measure and his latest print, which was slyly promoted on the show, was snapped up in droves.

But does providing 'dumbed down' explanations of painfully complicated concepts hold any negative consequences? You can take it one of two ways. First is the idea that everyone should have the right to educate themselves further than academia currently allows. No one wants to be a mindless consumer whose only talent is being able to name every Big Brother winner in chronological order. What these publications, television shows and caches of web information provide is a catalyst; a spark of inspiration for an inquisitive mind to broaden its horizons.

However, these are stepping stones to further reading or learning. The second point is that people can, and do, take these explanations as gospel. The amount of people I've met who actually think Erwin Schrödinger put a live cat in a box is rather worrying. Taking this and other 'lay' explanations at face value offers you no understanding of what they are truly about.

For the time being the only downside to the layperson rising is a higher calibre of pub conversation and questions like: "You haven't read 'The Selfish Gene'? Richard Dawkins is a God!" [NB: amusing irony].

Maybe for the moment it's the rise of the smartarse. The rest of us are too distracted by Brian's shiny hair to do anything else.

“Poetry lives and breathes in Sheffield: that’s what the very first Sheffield Poetry Festival is designed to show.”

Sheffield Poetry Festival is a new annual festival which launches for the first time this year, running from 26th March to 8th April. Organised by a committee group made up of most of the poetry stakeholders in the region, it’s a snapshot of how contemporary poetry is currently read, written and performed in Sheffield.

It features an eclectic line up, from big names such as Simon Armitage and George Szrites to a University Challenge event between Hallam and Uni staff and events featuring local writing groups. There is also a series of workshops available, and a strong programme of events tailored for young people too.

You can see the full listings on the website, but here’s a small selection of the best bits, including the two events we’re involved in - The Best of Shef Poetry Slam and The Shoebox Experiment.

sheffieldpoetryfestival.org.uk

JOE.

THE SHOEBOX EXPERIMENT.
30TH MARCH (7.30PM).
THE RIVERSIDE - £4 / £3 CONC.

Signposts brings you the first in a new series of performance experiments. Night Shift is a verse narrative, written and performed by Joe Kriss and Kayo Chingonyi, which explores nightlife and clubbing culture. This is a new piece, commissioned by Signposts. Joe Kriss and Kayo Chingonyi have performed at the Tate Modern, the Roundhouse, Sheffield City Hall and the Big Chill Festival.

Blast is a dramatic poem set in the declining steel industry of South Yorkshire, written and performed by Kevin Fegan. A redundant steelworker recounts “years of dirt and graft, the laughter and the sweat”. Blast is published by Five Leaves and was originally commissioned and broadcast by BBC Radio 4 Drama.

SIMON ARMITAGE, NELL FARRELL, ED REISS.
1ST APRIL (8PM). THE WORKSTATION,
CREATIVE LOUNGE - £8 / £5 CONC.

The most prolific and talented poet of his generation, Simon Armitage reads from his Selected Poems and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight translation. Sheffield writer Nell Farrells’ brilliant first pamphlet A Drink with Camus After the Match will also be launched, alongside Your Sort, the first full-length collection from prize-winning Bradford poet Ed Reiss.

25 YEARS IN THE NORTH: THE PARTY!
2ND APRIL (8.30PM).
BANK STREET ARTS - £4/ £3 CONC.

From its first ever issue, featuring three young poets named Armitage, Duffy and McMillan, The North has established itself as one of the most significant and entertaining literary magazines in the country. Now based in Bank Street, its Silver Anniversary party includes brilliant readings, together with nibbles, a not-poetry quiz and a raf e. Tonight also sees the launch of Your Bard, the Poetry Festival beer, brewed by The Sheffield Brewery Company and proudly named by Ann Sansom, one of The North’s editors. Wine, soft drinks and bookstall also available.

THE BEST OF SHEF POETRY SLAM.
3RD APRIL (7.00PM).
THE LESCAR - £4 / £3 CONC.

Brought to you by Word Life, Speakeasy, Vox and the Shipping Forecast, Sheffield’s regular open mic nights combine for one night only to present to you some of the best poets and performers from the local scene and beyond, including live music, a poetry slam and a feature slot from Tony Walsh, one of the UK’s most renowned performance poets. He has performed across the country, appearing at festivals like Manchester Literature Festival, Latitude, Glastonbury, and too many other poetry nights to mention. The winner of the poetry slam will be decided by the audience.

WORDLIFE.

SHEFFIELD POETICS.

COLLATED AND EDITED BY JOE KRISS.

THE SWALLOW.

She tried her hand at wood carving.
Small translucent fingers
Chiselling, chipping
Steadily away
Until a wren appeared.

A labour of love.
Smooth in places like
Worn wind ravaged bark
Beaten to a halt.

Defiant rough edges
Hidden beneath
The wren’s curved belly.
No one knows.

The fading sun glow
Of the gallery
Pulls her in – a spectator-
I watch. See a glimpse
Of the blue swallow
Inked into her back.
The shadow of her
Shoulder blades an abyss.

In shallow light
I am captured-
A moment isolated-
I am sure I see the swallow move.

My tremulous hands
Reach out, but she turns
Away from the light.
And all is still.
All is still.

JENNY ROSS.

ATLAS.

blues man, man of soul,
writhing in my forearms.
a heart too calloused to pump.
eyes too full, fading to chalk;
thin wooden fingers, whining joints,
sagging biceps splotched with bleach,
a broom mustache solid in sweat.
it hurts, blues man, to feel you fade.

your sax bleat against the sidewalk,
the dry reed snapping on impact.
your canned bank spills nickels into the storm drain,
and i feel your shattered muscles shiver against my chest,
your spine spasming back and forth, pounding against your lungs,
blocked by all the shit you’ve eaten in your seven or so decades.

your shoulders slump as your chin wilted to your wheezing heart.
i laid you down against the wall of Mother’s and searched for a payphone;
gazing back, you looked like an old black Atlas.
i stuck a few quarters in and yelled at a machine for four infinite minutes.
i stare, and see people looking anywhere but your face,
dropping change in your saxophone case.
your fingertips soon stop shaking,
and with it, my old earth sank into space,
and you thrust me into a new one.
it hurts here, blues man, man of soul.
it hurts here, and everyone’s got that rasp in their voice.

DAVID CLIFFORD TURNER.

SWAN.

“I will not fall in love, I will
not fall in love” he keeps saying,
remembering all his yesterdays,
his eyes like sad clouds,
and he lets her warm kisses
slip off his back, tries zen
and the art of letting her smiling eyes go;

but slowly, swan feathers appear all over him,
as if it is a hidden part of this nature,
and within a week or two he is flying
with no idea of where he is going to land.
With no idea of how he is going to land.
“I am not in love,” he keeps saying,
“I am just flying, having a look from up here.”

MATT BLACK.



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Dave McPherson

[InMe] solo set

Sun.13.March @ Fusion
7.30pm - 11pm Tickets £7 adv (14+)

Dave McPherson, the frontman of InMe, is releasing his debut solo album 'The Hardship Diaries' and he is set to play an intimate show at Sheffield SU on March 13th to promote the new material.



Hercules and –

Love Affair

Mon.14.March @ Foundry
7pm - 10pm Tickets £10 adv (14+)

The New York band are back with a new lineup and an unashamedly emotional celebration of dance music with their new album 'Blue Songs' - The Guardian



Playground Mafia

+ Hot Soles

+ The Legion

+ Grins + Q Ship

Fri.18.March @ Foundry
6.30pm - 10pm Tickets £5 adv (14+)

"If this lot were some kind of beverage they would be Tizer or Red Bull - the can shaken and sprayed Grand Prix podium style over the up-turned paws of bobbing spectators. Such is the fizzing, sticky, chaotic mess Sheffield's Playground Mafia incite when they go full throttle" - David Dunn, Sheffield Star



The Doors Alive

Sat.2.April @ Foundry 7-10pm
Adv. Tickets £10 adv (14+)

The Doors Alive is the no.1 tribute band to the legendary skillies rock guru's - The Doors. They recreate the sound, the look, the presence and the feel of a real The Doors concert, perfecting and effortlessly transporting the audience back in time with such classics as Light My Fire.



The Sunshine –

Underground

Mon.4.April @ Foundry
7pm - 10pm Tickets £9 adv (14+)

Since the release of their debut album in 2006, The Sunshine Underground have built up a great reputation for their epic, hectic live shows, including when they last appeared at Sheffield SU.



John Cooper Clarke

Thurs.26.May @ Foundry 7-10pm
Adv. Tickets £15 full / £12 NUS (14+)

The legendary performance poet is considered a major figure in punk poetry and punk literature, having opened for acts such as Sex Pistols, The Fall, Joy Division, Buzzcocks and New Order.



In The Flesh:

The Pink –

Floyd Show

Thurs.27.Oct @ The Octagon 7.30-11pm
Adv. Tickets £18 full / £12 NUS (14+)

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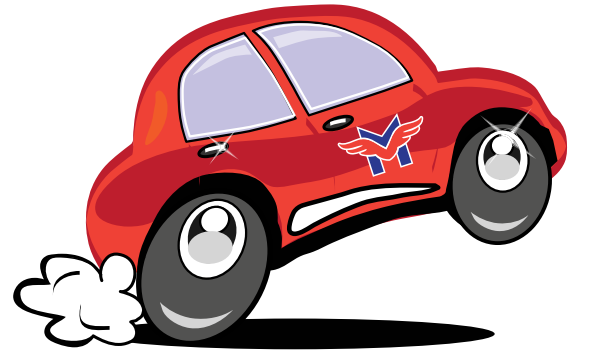
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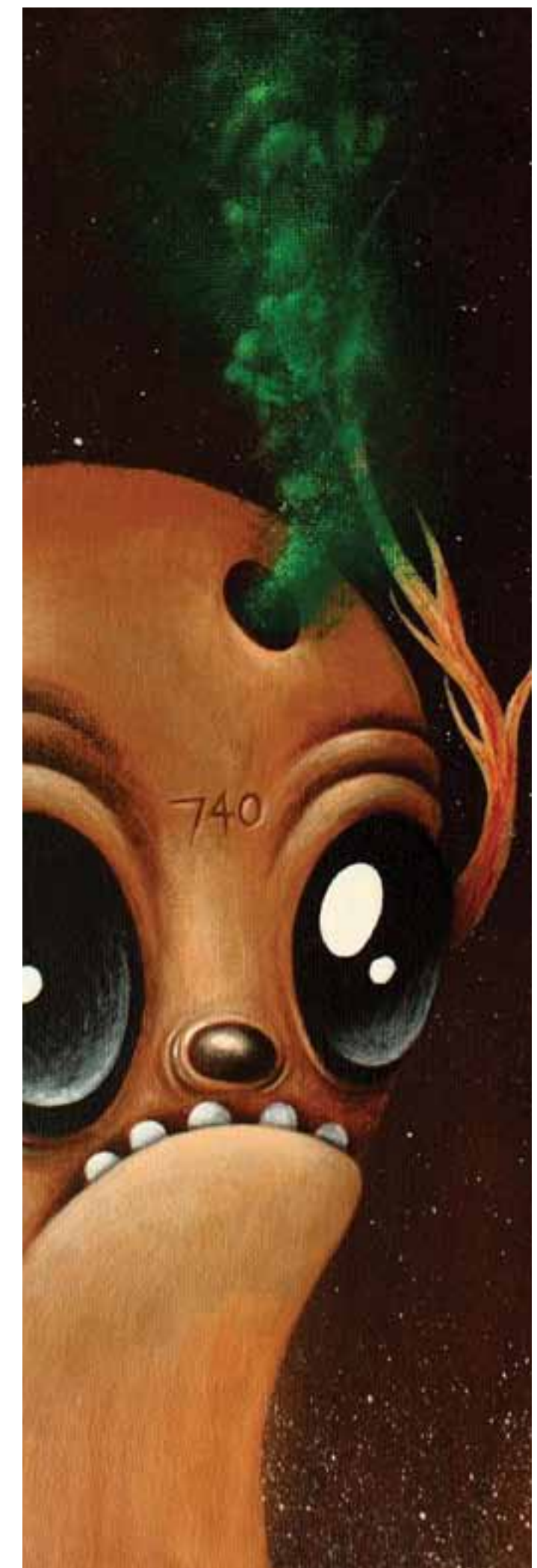
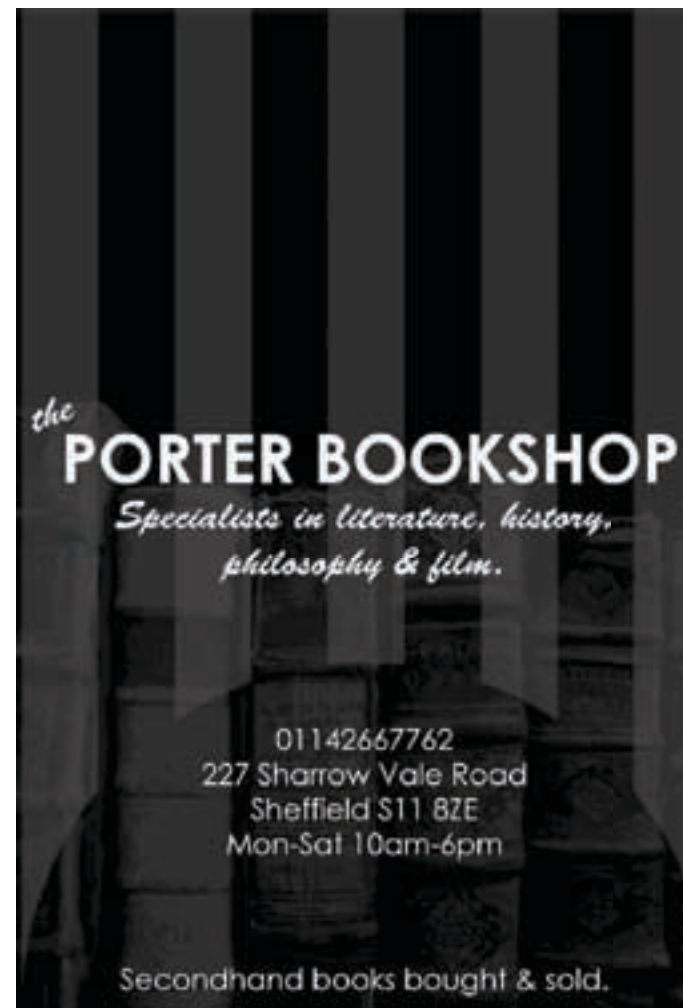
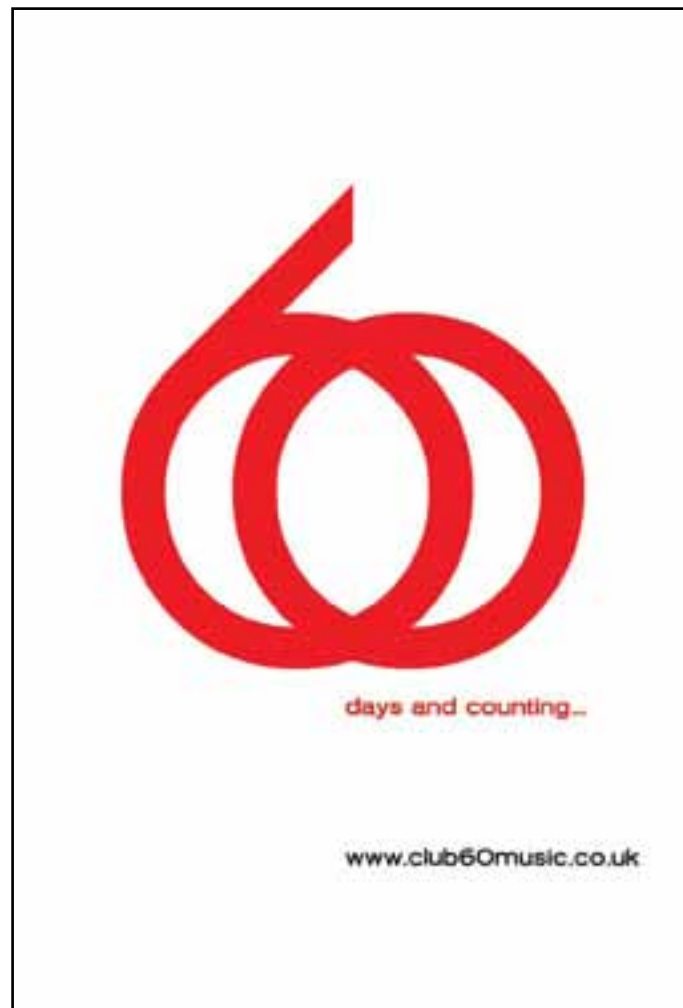
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SQUINK!

MECHANICAL PENCIL WITCHCRAFT.

INTERVIEW BY JONES.

Sheffield styles being represented again. Squink is another self-employed art cowboy making big noises outside of Sheffield in a unique market - hand-painted custom KidRobot figures. You might be forgiven at this point for thinking painting little models wasn't a way to make a living. This lad is here to prove you wrong.

The other half of this feature is on his work away from figures - flat paintings that are anything but - with his characters spawning further towards the ridiculous. There's thousands of artists churning out bad apings of similar styles, neglecting what Squink does best - continuity and attention to detail.

If you like the work featured here, you may be lucky enough to still be able to buy it, but with most of his work snapped up and sold before its even finished he's in a privileged position as an artist. Working from the uninterrupted shadowy depths of a Sheffield terrace, he isn't stopping in a hurry.

WHAT STARTED YOU DRAWING?

I've been into drawing as long as I can remember, so it's really hard to pin the blame on any particular event. If I had to narrow it down I'd say I was heavily motivated to pick up a pencil by cartoons and computer games. There was such a fantastic world inside that little electronic box that sat in the corner. I loved the way those characters lit up my Saturday mornings every week, so it wasn't long before I'd sit drawing them, which distracted me from doing the watching. I think eventually the pencil and paper became the focus of my weekends.

I remember I used to get my grandparents to draw me pages full of random shapes, and then I'd add a character to each, trying to utilise the curves they'd drawn for me. I still work in a similar way at times. I think also the art teachers at school were the only ones to offer any kind of encouragement. It was nice to hear "Chris, your drawing isn't bad, keep at it" rather than "Chris, you're absolutely rubbish at Maths, Science, English and PE. You're probably better off just setting fire to yourself and going out in a blaze of glory". In a way, the pencil saved my life, but it's still a fairly flammable item should I change my mind.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF STARTING A NEW PIECE?

My work is rarely planned out beforehand. I choose a colour, lay down a background and then just see where my mind takes it. It's always a scary process, knowing that it could be ruined at any moment, but I think that really helps keep things exciting. Making it up as I go along based on feelings and thoughts is probably what I enjoy most. It means everything that gets seen in my paintings is the result of that moment, and not just a painted version of a sketch that's been refined. I'm probably not doing this the right way, whatever the right way is, if there is a right way. I just don't know. I should probably have some coffee or an apple. Possibly both.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

Generally speaking, my inspiration comes from the things that surround me - plants, boxes, empty bottles of whiskey. Recently I've been really into the way things around us have been transformed with the addition of concrete structures to a once completely organic landscape. That combination of geometric shapes and the shapes you can only really find in nature is really very interesting. It's like building a tower of pythons around a bush baby and them still somehow managing to get along.

This is why you'll see a lot of vines, trees and antler shapes in my work, along with the more geometric elements, because I love that contrast. I was also very inspired by the way Japanese artwork worked its way over here. Initially I took the happy cheery approach with my characters, but more recently I decided to concentrate on what these characters we see in cartoons, comics and Japanese stationery items are like behind the scenes. Are they happy and fulfilled? Or are they all miserable, divorced and suicidal alcoholics? Probably.

TOOLS - WHAT DO YOU USE REGULARLY AND WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE?

I have a huge collection of ruined brushes, and these are definitely an important tool. Though I know they look ready for the bin, they're perfect for creating washes, rough textures and poking annoying spiders in the face. Having said that, I have a strange love for my mechanical pencil - there's something really amazing about having a pencil that never needs sharpening, and is filled with leads that automatically replace the one that runs out. I get excited just thinking about it. It's witchcraft!

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS?

The average day involves waking up, looking at what I was painting at 3am the previous night and sighing, trying to salvage it, then realising I've forgotten to have breakfast. Before I know it, it's 3pm. I go out for coffee and sit alone watching various pensioners going about their business, usually talking about operations or how much they love beetroot toasties.

I think if I didn't get out and take a break during the day I would go absolutely insane and start drinking paint and eating my brushes. I often don't know what day of the week it is, stay up until the birds are just waking up and then find it difficult to sleep because work I started earlier in the day is unfinished.

I think the daytime has far too many distractions. Once everyone is asleep, the headphones go on and I can really just concentrate on my work, with no danger of mind invasions by Jeremy Kyle or Judge Judy - they'd make a really sweet couple, and Judy would make an amazing cheese pickle sandwich, I'm sure.

OUT OF YOUR RECENT WORK, WHICH PIECE HAVE YOU ENJOYED MAKING THE MOST?

I'm really enjoying working on the organic cube series of paintings. I think just stepping away from customising toys and that whole scene in general for a while has been really good for me. I'll always love painting vinyl as it's really interesting applying my work to a 3D form, but I think this is more a step back to where I first started. Only now am I giving myself time to appreciate what I can do with a blank piece of paper, something that used to scare me to death.

HOW HAS YOUR ART EVOLVED OVER TIME?

It's definitely becoming less controlled. I think I went through a period after leaving college (after doing Graphic Design for four years) where I was applying more graphic techniques and elements, rather than just letting myself throw the rules aside and do what I wanted. It took me a while to get used to the absolute lack of boundaries. Now that's what I love most about it, though I still occasionally get commissioned work and people ask for something cleaner. I know once it's done I can go back and do whatever I like visually. Now I just don't feel like I'm creating unless my hands, face, knees and neck are covered in paint.

HOW HAS ART IN GENERAL CHANGED SINCE YOU STARTED?

The internet has certainly had a very positive effect on art in general. I've recently seen a steady growth in the number of new illustrators, with these young talents starting to realise that it's now possible to get your work seen worldwide without being part of some exclusive club or just having loads of money to get yourself out there. Unfortunately, because artwork is now so easily accessible, there is also a massive growth in the theft of illustrative work. This is an unfortunate side effect of the huge exposure the internet now grants us.

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

Right now, I'm working on an illustration for an iPhone/iPod app, an insert card for a toy due later in the year, and also trying to organise some form of show for the coming months.

ANY TIPS ON HOW TO SURVIVE MAKING MONEY FROM YOUR ART? DO YOU FIND IT IMPORTANT?

It's not easy. I never set out to do this for the money. It's always been about the expression and enjoyment for me. The only advice I could offer is to find a cheap supplier of art materials, be good to people and you will forever be rewarded. If possible find people who are willing to let you sleep on their floor when you can't afford your own place, and will feed you when you can't afford a single dry noodle. I think consistency is important in gaining a fan base, which certainly helps when it comes to survival.

Buy basics baked beans. These are very, very important.

WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE IN ART?

The recent influx of 'artists' doing it because it's 'cool' and because they want a piece of the juicy art peach; artists making a career out of it based on nothing but hype and over confidence - you can see and smell these people a mile off. If someone's heart isn't in it, that really bothers me.

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE IN ART?

Invention. I love to see characters and things straight from the minds of the creators - crazy contraptions, fantasy lands and bizarre abstract creatures straight from your dreams. It's like a window into someone else's mind, and I love that. Nothing bores me more than paintings of local landmarks or boats. As much as I like boats, I can see a real one that looks more life-like than your painting. I can't see a three-headed wolfsquirrel with 19 arms making a mushroom pancake. But I really want to. That'd make me smile.

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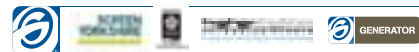
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“Rhythm and melody supply imitations of anger and gentleness, of courage and temperance, of all the qualities contrary to these, and of all the other qualities of character. These hardly fall short of the actual affections, as we know from experience, for in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change.” Aristotle.

“Music is thought to have an affinity with dancing, and a good hand upon instruments is by many people mightily valued. But it wastes so much of a young man’s time to gain but a moderate skill in it, and engages often in such odd company, that many think it much better spared.” John Locke.

Music is everywhere in today’s society. There is music in bars and pubs, music in bus depots and airport departure lounges, even music pumped onto the top of The Moor outside Debenhams. There are popular genres of music whose names themselves are prescriptive of the mode of listening - chill-out music, for example, or even dance music. This is music presented as recreational, perhaps as an accompaniment to or distraction from activities we regularly engage in. Yet those in positions of power to influence our aural environment acknowledge the deeper effect which musical sounds have on us; the airline plays music to relax people during the often frustrating experience of air travel; the bar plays music to energise us and sometimes to halt conversation, making us spend more on drinks. Essentially, music is often used in a way which on face value has the importance Locke accredits to it, yet it is broadcast by those who understand the power Aristotle ascribes to it, often as a method of controlling or influencing us.

Governments and dictators throughout history have controlled musical environments in order to further a political agenda. Most striking is Hitler’s adoption of Wagner as a musical justification for discrimination against the Jewish people. Hitler realised the emotive power of Wagner’s opera, apparently being reduced to tears whilst listening to ‘The Ring Cycle’. Yet by misinforming those with minimal musical education as to the subtext of the opera, he was able channel their powerful emotional response towards the reinforcement of opinions quite absent from the music itself. Wagner was almost certainly anti-semitic, but there is nothing in the libretto voicing these opinions, and to ascribe a written subtext to the musical content of the opera is to defeat the unclosing dialogue, inherent to music, which gives it power in the first place.

People would be less able to exploit music if it was given more attention during education. The national curriculum increasingly favours the essentials of reading, writing and arithmetic in primary education, stating (perhaps correctly) that these are the most important skills for a young person to hold if they wish to be successful in today’s society. But with budget cuts inevitable and music a low priority and expensive to teach, it seems its decline will continue. Musical learning may not be an obvious ingredient in creating an economically successful young person - which seems increasingly these days to be the only measure of whether someone is succeeding - but to believe that music is merely an end in itself is to ignore the parallels between musical structures and other aspects of life - the way that involvement in it can inform us of ways to progress through life as well as through a piece of music.

A striking example of music’s power to influence other aspects of our character is the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, a project of acclaimed conductor Daniel Barenboim bringing together young musicians from countries across the Middle East - Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese, Egyptians - and others from the Western countries that host the orchestra. Many of these young people have had hatred for one another instilled in them from an early age, and their parents and even peers have engaged in brutal wars against each other. Yet to play music together there is a requirement for them to listen to each other, at first perhaps just in the rehearsal room but gradually in their social lives too. The multi-directional, unending dialogue that playing orchestral music demands becomes reflected in their personal interactions, with grudges and hatreds instilled over generations dissipating in weeks. Barenboim argues that understanding music develops by necessity the mind’s capacity to strike balance, that it makes glaringly obvious the folly of someone playing their own part whilst disregarding those of others. He extends this metaphor to encompass what he sees as the primary stumbling block in trying to strike up a peace treaty in the Middle East; all involved parties are playing their parts loudly to the world whilst disregarding those of their neighbours. This is a simplistic way of viewing a complex process, but a resonant one nonetheless.

Playing music in an ensemble is the only time in formal education where I can remember my whole class simultaneously working together towards achieving something. Other subjects are obviously essential to personal development, and are rightly prioritised in a society in which interpersonal competition, rather than cooperation, is realistically the economic driving force. But we are already, like Locke, neglecting music’s role in developing communication skills applicable in all walks of life.



ABIGAIL WASHBURN.

26TH JANUARY.
GREYSTONES PUB.

REVIEWER – PETE MARTIN.

The Backroom at the Greystones is a great, newish addition to the Sheffield music scene. It provides an upmarket setting for gigs requiring a certain intimacy - tonight being a perfect example.

Local stalwart Dave Woodcock filled the support slot along with his band the Dead Comedians. After a delayed start, he played a selection of songs mostly drawn from his most recent album **Omaha High Low**, which has garnered praise from a number of publications.

Dave introduced his first song ‘One Man Band’ as being about “love, loss, Catholicism and the Wizard of Oz” - a boast that shows his reach, playfulness and cajones. His live set sticks pretty rigidly to his uptempo bluesy numbers, with Chris Saunders’ twangy guitar well to the fore. His best song, ‘City Lights’, slower and more reflective, features some nifty, melodious organ. There have been comparisons made to Waits, Cash, Dylan and Williams, but I’d propose that he be seen as a somewhat threadbare Richard Hawley.

Abigail Washburn is a very talented folk singer/musician originally from Illinois, but now based in Nashville. She has been lauded by Newsweek for creating a “...gorgeous, joyful new sound” and has recently toured in the US with Steve Martin’s bluegrass band. She has also been fortunate to have had albums produced by two esteemed knob-twiddlers, namely John Paul Jones of Led Zeppelin and Tucker Martine, who has worked with REM, Sufjan Stevens and the Decemberists.

This high calibre of collaborator is matched by her band, which is made up of bass, drums, twin violins and, in particular, Kai Welch, her song writing partner, who is equally adept on guitar, trumpet, keyboards and vocals, although his stand-up comedy attempts were hit and miss.

Abigail starts with the title track from her new album, ‘City Of Refuge’, where her trademark clawhammer banjo playing is highlighted. Two more songs from the album, ‘Last Train’ and ‘Bring Me My Queen’, showcase the impeccable musicianship of the band - brushed and malleted drums, swelling violins, dextrous keyboards and sweet harmonies. Backed by her flexible band, Abigail moves easily between styles - folk infused with splashes of blues, jazz, country and pop. The latter is evidenced on ‘Chains’, which could easily have been made by a **Rumours**-era Fleetwood Mac.

An interesting thread throughout the show is Abigail’s obvious love and understanding of Chinese music. She majored in East Asian studies at college, has lived and studied in China, can speak Mandarin and has toured the country regularly. She plays a traditional Chinese mountain song, ‘Taiyang’, sans banjo, then teaches the audience to sing along with the words to ‘Sa La’, which they do enthusiastically - something that Abigail is both delighted and genuinely touched by. China is her “second home” and promoting Sino-Western relations is something that she is clearly passionate about.

She is brought back for two encores, singing a capella with Kai on the apron of the stage before a beautiful violin and bowed bass-led coda. The mutual appreciation between artist and audience is obvious.

THE ECCENTRONIC REVIEW.

22ND JANUARY.
QUEEN’S SOCIAL CLUB.

REVIEWER – ANDREW HIRST.

Billed as ‘The Eccentronic Review’, this night was to be a showcase of Sheffield’s best weird pop talent, culminating in the debut performance of local supergroup The Chanteuse and the Crippled Claw.

Openers Pygmy Globetrotters begin the evening with a set of predictable grimy synth-based dirges topped with snarling monotonic vocals, offering us something slightly unpleasant and not particularly striking. The second support, The Pony Harvest, is an entertaining maniac who mumbles nonsense over cheerily cheap sounding synth pop tracks and spends the majority of one song constantly hitting an ornamental owl, declaring its eventual survival of this ordeal “proof that Sheffield Wednesday are the best team”.

Skywatchers, the third support, feel like they have so much more to offer than the altogether half-arsed set they deliver tonight. They clearly have a knack for writing a very solid pop song, and they sound extremely polished and well rehearsed, but the whole set lacked both feeling and any discernable individual streak that would have made them stand out from the countless legions of vaguely pleasant sounding acoustic synth pop artists.

The main event on the bill was The Chanteuse and the Crippled Claw, a supergroup consisting of ‘The Crippled Claw’ aka Adrian Flanagan (of Kings Have Long Arms fame), ‘The Chanteuse’ aka Liverpool’s Candi Payne, Dean Honer of I Monster and Lucy Fawcett of Arch Nazards. Candi Payne has a striking voice and a commanding beauty, strangely at odds with the rest of the band; a veritable rag-tag bunch of oddballs. Adrian Flanagan spends most of the night skulking behind a keyboard, wearing both his shades and his bag throughout, occasionally making bizarre hand gestures at the audience and babbling strange jokes in between tracks. After a few songs he gets up and begins chewing hob-nobs into the mic before unceremoniously chucking them into the crowd. Honer (bald but sporting a large beard and hidden in the corner) and Fawcett (small, meek and unassuming) perform their roles flawlessly in the background, never once drawing attention from the quietly beautiful Payne and the entertainingly psychotic Flanagan.

Given their interesting stage presence I was hoping for something more interesting musically. Unfortunately, there isn’t much here that particularly grabs me. Debut single ‘Are You One?’ is the standout song, its main refrain utterly infectious, drifting back into my head on and off days after this gig. Payne’s voice recalls the best voices of Northern Soul and is a pleasure to listen to, almost making up for the moments of songwriting blandness. I can’t help feeling that she will carry them along, her voice proving to be the main draw and allowing them to be lazy on the songwriting front. I really want them to prove me wrong and release another song as strong as ‘Are You One?’, but I’m not getting my hopes up.

ESBEN AND THE WITCH.

7TH FEBRUARY.
THE HARLEY.

REVIEWER – ROBERT COOKE.

For the second year in a row, Esben and the Witch are currently tipped for big things. In many ways little has changed since a year ago, almost to the day, when the trio last played at this venue to half as many people. After all, they’ve only just got round to releasing their debut album **Violet Cries**, a stunning combination of clattering percussion, feral guitars, wailing vocals and goth-folk aesthetics.

But before Esben and the Witch get the chance to prove whether they’ll finally live up to the hype, Trophy Wife dominate the stage. There is more depth in this band than their name suggests, with gasping, sensitive and fragile vocals curiously and fascinatingly propelled from behind by an engine of percussion. Their sound is characterised by house-inspired rhythms. ‘White Horses’ audibly bounces, while ‘Discovery’ cracks and blossoms into an abstract atmospheric jam. These tracks are club-ready, and it is this aspect of Trophy Wives which is the most derivative and the least interesting. They show their understanding of texture when their beats click into place, but what emerges tends to be fairly sterile, if danceable.

This is never a problem for tonight’s headliners, as Esben and the Witch’s songs never do quite kick in. Often, tightly processed beats flood from the speakers, but the tension this creates is never quite satisfied by the release of apocalyptic guitars that constantly feels like it is only a few bars away. This can be turned into a criticism when picking apart individual tracks, but when structural subversion of this sort comes in such a constant stream, it’s an exhilarating live experience. They keep you captivated by constantly fooling you into expecting their energy to suddenly burst, but they’re smarter than that. Their performance gives you all of the thrill of the anticipation and none of the anti-climax.

In this way, Esben and the Witch never impose an artificial structure on their music, but this doesn’t mean their ideas are unresolved. In fact, it’s the opposite – each passage feels more complete as it is driven to its natural conclusion. At times, it can be hard to know whether everything is happening at once or whether nothing is happening at all. Part of the intrigue of this band comes from not knowing how sounds are being created, or even which instrument is supposed to be creating them. This shouldn’t be mistaken for indulgence though. The self-control and focus that Esben and the Witch practice is evidenced by vocalist Rachel Davies, who awakes from a trance at the end of each track, having spent it howling from behind her mop of hair. When the band leave the stage, it should be in the knowledge that they’ve awakened their audience to new possibilities within live performance, and music in general.

IN NEW MUSIC WE TRUST.

28TH JANUARY.
FUSION AND FOUNDRY.

REVIEWER – JACK SCOURFIELD.

For a number of reasons, I’d set myself against Radio 1’s In New Music We Trust showcase night before I even passed through the doors of the Fusion and Foundry. My primary qualm is a fairly glaring one, and can probably be better expressed in an equation than in prose - In New Music We Trust + Pete Tong and Judge Jules = ??? Never has a misnomer been more blatant than when lining up these two aging disc spinners on the same bill as an act called Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs. Then there were Radio 1’s ‘new signings’, Skream and Benga. Ooh, I wonder if they’ll play any of that ‘dubstep’? I hear it’s quite good. Then there was the questionable terminology of the promise of the station’s ‘entire dance family’. With my head safely lodged up my own arse, the DJs from the Radio 1 dance family I would’ve most liked to see are Benji B and Gilles Peterson – both not on the bill. Oh dear, looks like some of the kids didn’t want to come and visit grandma on this occasion. Another precursory irritation was that much of the good stuff wasn’t actually available to your average reveller - or even your average Now Then reviewer - as the likes of Retro/Grade and messrs Skream and Benga played at a limited entry pre-show. The last – but by no means least – qualm that sprang itself upon me was when I discovered that Kutski was a hard dance DJ. And I’d have to watch him. Billy, pass me my shotgun.

As it turned out, Billy needn’t have spent those four hours polishing my double-barrelled shooter. Arriving around half 10, we were greeted by the bobbing curls of Annie Mac, who was blitzing the Foundry crowd with some particularly fizzling electro and techno. She was followed in the main room by Pete Tong, who did us reviewers who love a hackneyed wise-crack no favours by failing to provide any notable “it’s all gone...” moments, instead providing a fairly solid if slightly uninspiring two hours of Balearic tech-house.

A brief peek into the smaller Fusion room saw Judge Jules pumping his fists in the air as a fairly meagre but committed band of ravers swayed along to his trance offerings, but I scarpered before Kutski took to the decks, deciding that there were many things I’d rather do than reside in a half-empty second room listening to hard dance - most of them involving severing my testicles with a variety of rusty implements and then eating them.

Shortly after I accosted him in the back bar and told him I loved him, Rob da Bank took to the main room stage and ripped through an eclectic but rave-centric set, comprising plenty of drum ‘n’ bass and topping it off with a heartily-received ‘Out of Space’. By this point – around 3am – the crowd was beginning to thin out a bit, although those who remained were still partying like it was 1999 – which it may as well have been, considering the distinct lack of any particularly ‘new’ music that was seeping through the speakers.

While the event may have slightly compromised on its pledge of delivering fresh musical cuts, the DJs present certainly knew which tunes to draw on to keep the masses happy. We headed for the exit shortly after Kissy Sell Out interjected a set of jump-up electro and dubstep with a bass-heavy remix of Imogen Heap/Jason DeRulo, accompanied by what seemed like the night’s 3000th confetti explosion, but I left feeling better satisfied by the night’s entertainment than I’d been expecting. While it may have packed more bells and whistles than freshly pressed exclusive tracks in its suitcase, Radio 1 found itself a welcome guest in Sheffield, and there were few in attendance who wouldn’t welcome them back with open arms.



...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD.

TAO OF DEAD.
SUPERBALL MUSIC.

REVIEWER – BEN DOREY.

Cult Texan rockers ...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead released their first album of the new decade last month, **Tao of Dead**. The first thing that struck me about it was the cover, which looks like it was drawn by a Final Fantasy obsessed GSCE art student, but I did my best to ignore this and let the music do the talking. AYWKUBTTOD nestle somewhere between the American indie rock scene and British prog circa 1974, both musically and lyrically. This album proves how awkward a position this is.

After a disinteresting introduction - impressive solely for the number of slow-moving post rock clichés it manages to pack into under three minutes - we come to 'Pure Radio Cosplay', and hence (unfortunately) the high point of the album. This track is a nicely constructed piece of modern rock 'n' roll, sounding like a hybrid of The Who and Pearl Jam, with jangling guitar lines leading to a shouty chorus and thrashing power chords. Nothing ground breaking, but pleasing nonetheless. This makes way for the rather gloomily named 'Summer for All Dead Souls', which also features complex guitar noodling segueing into more thrashing chords and whole-group-screaming choruses. Good for headbanging, but not really for listening.

After this song we reach a succession of shorter tracks vaguely melded together. It is here that we find some of the stronger moments on the album, where between the constantly pedalling chords and screaming of the choruses the band demonstrate the creativity and virtuosity that has gained them a following. On 'Fall of the Empire' the vocals skim over a series of interesting chord intervals that throw the mood of the song about disconcertingly. 'The Wasteland' features a lovely verse which sounds reminiscent of Yes, with a looping guitar line and archaic synths in constant conversation. 'The Spiral Jetty' opens with a spooky piano line accompanied by whirling electronic noise, before a screeching guitar line ruins it somewhat. The problem is that I only happened upon these nuggets of goodness due to my sense of duty to endure the whole record in order to review it. Between these islands of interest lie identikit choruses of thrashing, distorted chords and quasi-mystical screaming about the bleakness of just about everything. The band try to shake things up by introducing multiple time changes and fairly complicated instrumental lines, but most of the album is still harmonically predictable and the lyrics border on laughable. The album ends on a 16-minute track which epitomises all the bad elements of prog excess.

Trail of Dead have fallen into the trap that made prog the subject of so much mockery in the mid 70s. They are taking themselves far too seriously whilst writing music which is utterly ridiculous. This is unfortunately made worse by the fact that it is now 2011, so they've had 35 years to learn that trying to express oneself through gothic fairy tales over such overblown music is all a bit silly.



DEAF CENTER.

OWL SPLINTERS.
TYPE RECORDINGS.

REVIEWER – GORDON BARKER.

Back in 2005 Norwegians Erik Skodvin and Otto Totland released **Pale Ravine** as the genre-defining project Deaf Center, unleashing a shockwave through both the modern classical and ambient drone worlds. With their debut LP they perfectly bridged the gap between classical and ambient electronics, filled with dark atmospherics, sweeping string arrangements and frail piano pieces that tighten the heart, resulting in a beautifully-crafted soundtrack to a non-existent internal film.

After going their separate ways for the last five years, being involved in different projects ranging from the dark drone of Svarte Greiner to the beautiful piano pieces of Nest, as well as setting up the fantastic Miasmah record label, the boys have joined forces once again to bring us new lonely tales.

The first noticeable growth shown in this record is the production. On Pale Ravine - yes, this is going to be a constant comparison, due mainly to the fact that Deaf Center are such a stand-out act and are difficult to compare to others, even within the genre - they relied heavily on synthesizers and keyboards. Although effective, this approach has mostly been removed in this venture to give way to superior recording techniques, organic drones and a much more compassionate, earthly tone. Little to no synthesis is clear on this record, showing the overwhelming depth of Skodvin's cello arrangements and field recordings that create larger, more touching swells and curves which show just what they have learnt since their first release.

The opening track, 'Divided', brings the album screaming into life as layer upon layer of cello throws you instantly back into the dark maudlin world they narrate so well. As the cello bass swells under the many bawling layers, you begin to feel Deaf Center's awesome cinematic power. Providing a perfect, almost formless introduction to the mini epics that follow, the album moves on to the heart wrenching and wistful 'Time Spent' before the heavily brooding 'New Beginning (Tidal Darkness)'.

This album reflects all of the hopes of avid fans of the artist and genre. It shows massive growth and perfectly honed skills within the beautiful original formula, and although I personally massively enjoyed it I would highly recommend that newcomers to the style listen to Pale Ravine first. This is a prime example of needing to witness the first half in order to understand the second.



ILLUM SPHERE.

DREAMSTEALIN.
TECTONIC.

REVIEWER – TOM BELSHAW.

It's the year 2047- 2083. Specifics are a thing of the past. Every city and town has been prefixed with the word 'Neo'. Futuristic biker gangs have risen to rule the streets. Places like Neo-Burton-on-Trent are overrun by crazed clowns on two tires hell bent on twisted justice. Music has transgressed the confines of simply being audio and is literally everywhere. I'm not sure how or why. Life is now perpetually scored dependent on mood... somehow. I really wish I'd thought this part through more. Regardless, the soundtrack to this dystopian nightmare? Illum Sphere.

In reality, I imagine we'll all be listening to white noise and metronomes in 36 to 72 years' time. However, Illum Sphere's latest two track (plus mandatory remix) EP 'Dreamstealin'/Blood Music' gives us a realisation of what the 80s thought the future would sound like.

The grated drones and tortured violins of 'Dreamstealin' would sound just as at home on Shoji Yamashiro's soundtrack to awesome late 80s manga AKIRA. With its addition of tweaked out glitches, compulsory 909 claps and baked shakes, the track plays like a current day re-boot to a former day OST. The constant pace provided by tumbling kicks and offbeat synth stabs coupled with a healthy dose of high pass Korg conjure images of riding through a neon-lit cityscape on a really sweet red motorbike, hitting blokes dressed as clowns with metal pipes.

Well, they would if you'd seen AKIRA.

'Blood Music' sits as a support track should. Ethereal drones mimic the style of the lead track and create a theme for the EP. Lounge tinged keys, muted sirens, gruff vocal yelps and discordant percussion all play their part in making some incredibly well crafted and decidedly above average filler - filler much like the little inflatable bags you sometimes get in a box holding fragile content, like, I don't know...an original 1988 Streamline copy of AKIRA on VHS?

As it stands 'Dreamstealin'/ Blood Music' isn't a step ahead or a step behind 2010's great and well received **Titan EP**, but when you carve yourself a niche with as much wiggle room as Illum Sphere has it makes it decidedly difficult to become stagnant.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to shout "TETSUO!" from atop a large pile of discarded masonry. No? Oh, come on - the film came out 23 years ago!



SPOKES.

EVERYONE I EVER MET.
COUNTER RECORDS.

REVIEWER - BEN ECKERSLEY.

It's been more than two years since the release of their debut EP, and even longer since Manchester-based band Spokes started making waves on the Northern music scene, so to say **Everyone I Ever Met**, their first full length release has been long expected is something of an understatement. But some things are worth waiting for. Full of rich textures, expressive outbursts contrasted with tender acoustic moments; with energy, melancholy and full-on chaos combined and balanced - this really is a gem.

Those readers familiar with the brilliant yet rare **People Like People Like You** will have previously heard Spokes as a mainly instrumental band, creating panoramic soundscapes in search of something epic, and the new album's title track is rooted in this style, with a haunting violin line shimmering above shifting textures below. So far, so Explosions In The Sky - but there is much more to this album than that, and the band have clearly spent the intervening years growing in stature and developing ideas. This is the product of a band that has come of age.

The first and most striking new sound is that of the band singing, which they're not half hearted about at all. It's rare to be able to describe a band as choral, but on lead single 'We Can Make It Out' they all sing at once, in unison. It's a leaf straight out of the Arcade Fire's textbook, but it's wonderful. There's much more punch from the percussion here too, and the ever-present violin is no longer restricted to lonely single lines, but instead thick Patrick Wolf-esque textures, ostinato quavers that drive the music forwards. On stand-out track 'Torn Up In Praise' these elements are joined by a chaotic wall of noise from the guitar, the resulting euphoria seeming to belong far more to a Pentecostal church in Alabama than a rainy night in Manchester.

There is a new, much gentler voice to the band as well. Skilfully blending Mercury Rev's more tender moments with the sadness of Death Cab For Cutie, with possibly even a little English traditional folk too - the album was recorded in seclusion in the Northumbrian countryside, after all. The closing track, 'When I Was A Daisy, When I Was A Tree', is a beautiful counterpoint to the verve of earlier. There are a few moments when the album becomes a touch too introspective; two-minute acoustic ballad 'Sun It Never Comes' is entirely superfluous, but the quieter voices add a necessary balance to the overall sound.

One possible flaw is the album's originality, or lack thereof. I've already listed quite a few precursors to their sound, to which I'd add Broken Social Scene and Efterklang. This is no pale imitation, but I still want to hear them striking out into new pastures. Halfway through the album, on 'Peace Racket', the elements of the band are carefully added one at a time, and out of this mix something that is wholly theirs emerges. It's brilliant, but their masterpiece is yet to come.



PORTICO QUARTET.

DEVELOPING THE SOUND.

INTERVIEW BY SAM WALBY.

Originally signed to Vortex Records, which was set up by the owners of the Vortex Jazz Club in London, busking troubadours Portico Quartet are a band that are still in their relative infancy. Now working on album number three following the re-release of their debut Knee-Deep in the North Sea on Peter Gabriel's Real World Records in January, the four-piece have reached a fork in the road – more of the same or something different? Considering the development shown on 2009's Isla, it would be a fair bet to plump for the latter option. I conversed with saxophonist Jack Wyllie, and he seemed to agree.

Tell our readers a bit about how you got together as a band.

I've known the bass player [Milo Fitzpatrick] since I was about six or seven years old. I met him at primary school in Southampton. We started playing tunes together – rock bands and a bit of jazz here and there. We both moved down to London, and went to the School of Oriental and African Studies, where I met Nick [Mulvey], who's the guy who plays hang. We started playing together a bit – Nick was on the guitar, I was playing sax and guitar. Nick knew Duncan [Bellamy, drummer] from Cambridge, where they grew up. They'd known each other for a pretty long time as well. I invited Milo along and he started playing some double bass. We started busking on the South Bank, and it happened like that. Two sets of old-school friends.

Do most of you come from a formal music background?

Not really, no. I'm pretty much self-taught – well, I did an A level in Music and had a few lessons, but not really. Duncan has never been taught, can't read music. Nick has probably had a few lessons in his time, here and there. But he taught himself the hang, because no-one really teaches it. Milo is more formally taught – he did a degree in Contemporary Music and Jazz at Goldsmiths.

So you just learnt together...

Well, we were all playing music before we got together. I'd been playing for about seven years before I met Nick. But we definitely learnt how to groove together while busking.

How did going from busking on the street to performing on stage affect the dynamic of the band, do you think? Was it a positive way to start off? Not every band starts out like that.

It was great to really hone the tunes. We'd practice them a bit, and then go busking with them. We'd sit on the South Bank and play for five hours straight – improvising a bit, but generally playing the tunes we'd written. So it got us really tight, and we started learning how each other works musically. We used to play down by the National Theatre, and it's a really good advert for yourself – right in the heart of cultural London. We sold a lot of CDs, which I think laid the foundation for a fanbase.

Most of those tracks were presumably what went on to form Knee-Deep in the North Sea...

Actually, there was one, a bit of a jam, called 'Dawn Patrol', that we wrote before we started busking. That ended up on the second album. It developed over time until we thought it was ready, although I think it would've sounded better on the first album.

Why did you choose to re-release Knee-Deep in the North Sea? Were you unhappy with the original mix?

Not unhappy with it. It's just that we originally recorded and mixed it in about four or five days. We mixed it in a day and a half, I think. Normally, you spend a week or two on that sort of thing. I was really happy with the album, but I thought we could go in there and realise it more fully. How we thought it could sound.

What's it been like working with John Leckie and why did you choose him to produce the re-release?

John produced our second album, Isla. We just really liked the sound he got with that. He really brings a track to life through the mixing, and he's used to working with more acoustic instruments and has produced a lot of world music. He did a good job on Isla, so we thought he could do the same with Knee-Deep.

You didn't actually re-record any bits, did you?

No, we added some live tracks though. One that we recorded at Maida Vale, 'All The Pieces Matter', which was just a live session, one take job. We also included live recordings of 'Knee-Deep in the North Sea' from Copenhagen, and 'Steps in the Wrong Direction'.

You weren't tempted to return to any of the recordings then?

Nahhh. Nah, no. We were up for remixing it, because we thought we could bring more to the album, but I didn't want to go back and fully revisit them. They were recorded then, and we want to focus on doing new stuff.

What is it that you love so much about the hang and how did it become part of the Portico sound?

Duncan bought a hang at Womad a long time ago, about seven years ago now. We just started playing around with it. It's quite a new instrument – invented in 2000 – so it doesn't have many cultural connotations. It creates a bed which you can feel quite free to play on top of. You can create a completely new sound from the hang, because it isn't associated with anything else. It's based on the steel drum, but slightly different. And the gamelan, as well. There's an almost exotic sound to it.

I've heard it is hard to get hold of a hang these days.

It was quite easy back then. Before they got quite big, the company that makes them in Switzerland used to distribute them quite widely. You could just buy them in shops, at festivals. Basically, they got really popular and demand outstripped supply. So instead of selling the patent, they decided to cut the distribution. Now you have to go over to Bern to pick one up. They make a certain amount each year. There's a long waiting list.

I read as well that if you are going to sell one these days, you have to give them the option of buying it back first.

Yeah, that's it – when we went over about two years ago they made us agree to that.

It would be a nightmare if you were to lose one on tour.

It would be nigh-on impossible to replace our hangs. They only make them in one key now, so we can never get the same ones. We would be absolutely fucked if we lost them. I think we have ours insured for about ten grand each though, so at least that would buy us some time to write some new music! We are starting to write stuff now that is less based on the hang anyway, moving towards other instruments.

How did your tour with Penguin Cafe Orchestra come about?

We were linked up by an organisation that basically teams up bands that they think would go well together and subsidise the tour. And I like them, so it should be nice.

When can we expect a third album from Portico Quartet?

We started writing for a new album about five days ago. We've got a studio round the corner from where we live. We've been doing it up for the past week and a half. We're writing cool tunes, I think. Still quite embryonic at this point, but I'm quite excited. We've been using the hang quite differently – sampling it quite a lot, putting effects on it. We've changed our sound over the last year, while we've been touring, to use more electronics. Mainly acoustic instruments that are manipulated live. I can sample my sax, Duncan has a link from my sax to his effects. He's got contact mics in his drums. And then the hang as well. So we've got these cross-manipulation channels going on. Just developing the sound, I guess.

Will you have those tracks completely nailed before going into the studio, or do you like to work in the moment as well?

It depends how it comes out. It's hard to say at the moment. If it's more improvised, I suppose we'll develop bits in the studio, but on the last album we were pretty much done, and then we just did overdubs. I guess we'll have the basis down and then build on that.

Are you interested in soundtrack work? Have you had any offers?

Yeah, I'd really like to do one actually. We might be doing one soon if it comes off. We've pitched for a few, but the films aren't necessarily going ahead. But I'd really like to do something like that

Would you write specifically for the project, or use old tracks?

I'd like to write specifically for it, and I don't think we'd approach it in terms of tracks, but more as a score.

What about collaborations for the new album?

We're quite open to it, particularly for this next album. Last time around, we were still finding where we were, just the four of us, and were quite happy with that. For this album, maybe we'll get a singer on a couple of tracks. I suppose at the moment my saxophone is the 'voice', but I think if we found the right singer it could be really exciting.

What advice do you have for people looking to make a living from their music?

Eerrrrmm...

I saved the hardest question till last.

[laughs] You've got to do something different. If you're in a funk band, there's going to be hundreds of bands doing the same style.

It is really hard to succeed if you're a jazz player, because it's so competitive. I couldn't do it, so we've done something a bit different and carved out our own little niche within that. A lot of people who go down the jazz path find it really hard, but if you are doing your own thing, no-one else can beat you at your own game.

Do you think getting out on the streets and busking is a good way to sidestep that?

Definitely. For us, it was just about doing something new. Getting out there from the very beginning was a great way to start off, to mix it up and play around with instrumentation.

porticoquartet.com

SINGING KNIVES.

SHEFFIELD'S EXPERIMENTAL BASTION.

INTERVIEW BY SAM WALBY.

In Now Then #29, I said Singing Knives Records “specialise in folk, jazz and noise with a weird tribal junkyard edge”. Well, try as I might, I can’t think of a better way of describing the music they release. ‘Leftfield’ just doesn’t cut it. I spoke to co-founder Jon about the label and its intentions.

How and when did Singing Knives get started?

Singing Knives started when Fiona and me moved down to Sheffield from Leeds six years ago enthused by the DIY gig community of LS6, loosely constellated around the Cops & Robbers fanzine and the Brudenell Social Club. We were keen to see something similar burgeon in Sheffield, although with slightly fewer comedy math rock bands.

What has been your best experience of promoting nights here?

Putting on a wild night featuring Sunburned Hand Of The Man, Corsano-Flower and, then local favourites, Chora at the gone-but-never-forgotten Matilda Social Centre in 2006. So many people were flooding in that the manager of Gatecrasher came down to see what was going on. But then again, many of our best nights have been witnessed by less than a dozen enthralled people in a squat, micro-gallery or cutlery workshop.

Do you see yourself as part of a wider network of people pushing “experimental” music in the UK?

Within every genre of music I’d hope you’ll find people challenging boundaries and definitions in their own way but, yeah, if we’re talking about stuff that’s genuinely unpredictable, led by chance and intuition rather than occasionally deviating from an authoritative script – the Chora/Haimenfeldman boys in Peckham, the Helhesten/Psykick Dancehall team in Glasgow, the Blood Stereo/Chocolate Monk doofs in Brighton, the Goldenlab lovestream in Manchester...

What is Sheffield’s best venue?

We like new environments, so hopefully the next one. If anyone knows of a place free of profit-focused managers and tasteless beer/decor that would be willing to host us then please get in touch.

What is unique about Sheffield’s music scene?

The number of former industrial spaces available for cheap/free use for music, and a sizeable student population that only seem to develop an aesthetic appetite and the courage to leave Ecclesall Road once they’ve graduated.

Which local acts should our readers be looking out for?

Can they tell us? Since that six-page Sound of Sheffield article was written about us in The Wire magazine last year, we’ve been trying to locate the local hotbed of like-minded musicians they enthused about. Although, Blue Yodel’s Carry On Habiting set was amazing at the Graves Art Gallery last year and Ross Parfitt’s aleatory microtonal experiments always get us in the mood.

What is on the cards for Singing Knives in 2011?

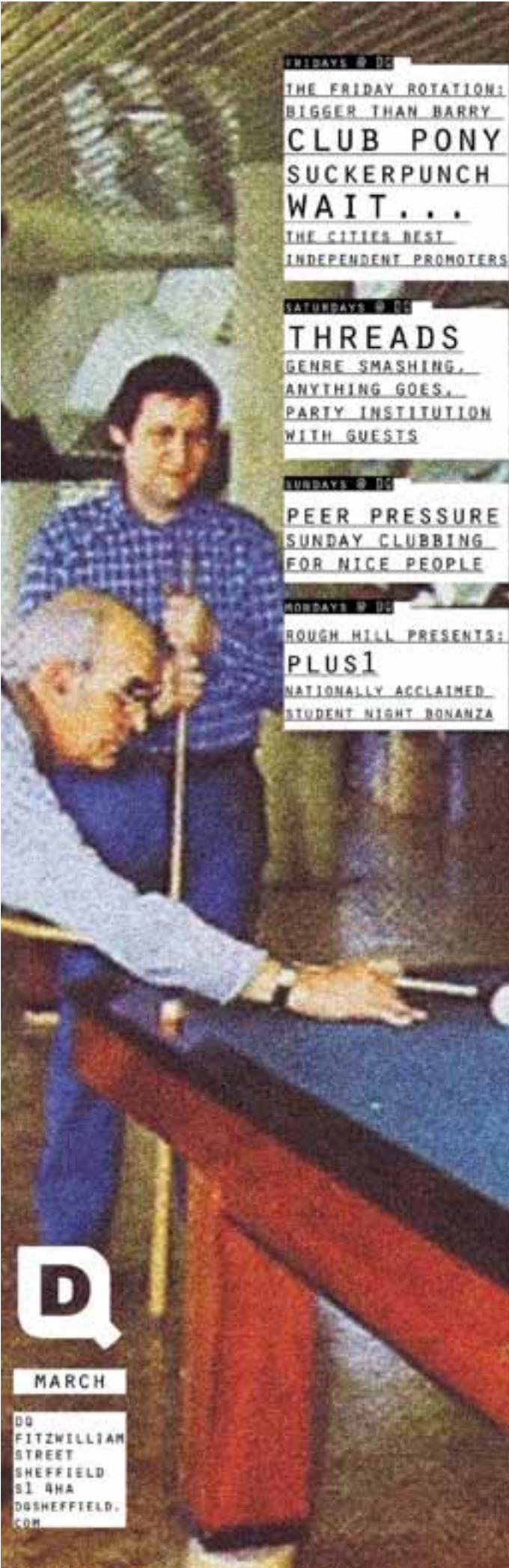
To continue trying to loosen up some of the frankly perverted conceptions of music most people seem to have from 1,000 years of having the composer perched on the pedestal and 100 years of the commercial product being hoiked up there to join it. Creating music socially without an exam certificate, some impressive chops you can imitate from an embarrassing 70s rock star or a commodity image droves of people will buy into is not self-indulgent or pretentious, despite this being the stock line. It’s something all humans have the capacity to do and if it’s something that interests them then they should do it.

Speaking of which, I’d recommend the monthly Noise Upstairs event at the Riverside. Free entry, just turn up, put your name in a hat if you feel like participating and, as they say on their website, “names are pulled out, ensembles formed and hearts broken”. There are a couple of regulars that improvise with a capital ‘I’, but there’s an egalitarian vibe so I’m sure you could mic up your forehead, slap it in free time and there would be a couple of new friends lost in that sound world with you.

singingknivesrecords.co.uk



HARLEY LIVE	
We 02/03	19:30 The Harley Small Ideas ➔ LED BIB ➔ £6.00
Th 03/03	19:30 The Harley Wolves Fest ➔ CHICKENHAWK ➔ £6.00
Fr 04/03	19:30 The Harley Drowned in Sound ➔ DANANANANAYKROYD ➔ £7.00
Sa 05/03	19:30 The Harley Drowned in Sound ➔ FORMER GHOSTS ➔ £5.00
Th 10/03	19:30 The Harley Unquiet Desperation ➔ NAPOLEON IIIIRD ➔ £5.00
Sa 12/03	19:30 The Harley X Ray Horse ➔ THE BRUTE CHORUS ➔ £5.00
Su 13/03	19:30 The Harley BEARSUIT ➔ £5.00
Th 24/03	19:00 Queens Social Club Nothing Short of Total War ➔ JOSH T PEARSON ➔ £8.50
Su 27/03	19:30 The Harley Drowned in Sound ➔ GALLOPS ➔ £5.00
Sa 09/04	19:30 Queens Social Club MABEL LOVE ➔ £7.00
Sa 16/04	19:00 Queens Social Club THE CROOKES ➔ £6.50
Sa 16/04	19:30 The Harley HIEM ➔ £5.00
We 20/04	19:30 The Harley Unquiet Desperation ➔ HEEBIE JEEBIES ➔ £5.00
Th 28/04	19:30 Queens Social Club Drowned in Sound ➔ BEST COAST ➔ £12.50
Su 01/05	13:00 Queens Social Club Drowned in Sound ➔ DAMO SUZUKI ➔ £7.50
Mo 02/05	19:30 The Harley CLE ➔ KONG ➔ £5.00
Su 08/05	19:30 The Harley FIXERS ➔ £5.00
Mo 16/05	19:30 Queens Social Club LOW ➔ £15.00
Su 22/05	19:30 The Harley Children for Breakfast ➔ PARTS AND LABOUR ➔ £7.00
Mo 23/04	19:30 The Harley Plug ➔ COLOURMUSIC ➔ £5.50
Tu 24/05	19:30 The Harley Drowned in Sound ➔ THREE TRAPPED TIGERS ➔ £5.00
Harley Box Office ➔ Mo - Sa 11:00 - 18:00 334 Glossop Road ➔ Sheffield ➔ S10 2HW 0114 275 2288 ➔ www.theharley.co.uk	



FILMREEL.

AWARDS.

ALEX KEEGAN.

During the early months of the cinematic calendar, much of Hollywood's elite gather together to congratulate themselves on their wonderful achievements the previous year. Whether it be for realistically chopping one's arm off with a blunt pen knife, or managing to successfully convince people that ballet is actually more than just prancing about in a leotard, those folks sure deserve a pat on the back. And what better way to show this appreciation than presenting those fortunate enough with a gold-coated metal statuette in honour of such noble accomplishments?

Awards evenings have long been known as the place where the beautiful go to flaunt their assets to a bay of predatory press, draped in the latest designer label. Just in case we had forgotten how terribly plain and inconsequential our lives are, they are there to remind us. Consequently, most of the media coverage of these events focuses on devising the perfect breast to hip ratio of a Hollywood leading lady, rather than on the very thing these events were created to celebrate.

As the earliest and undoubtedly most redundant, the Golden Globes is often regarded as a predictor of which way the Bafta and Oscar judges will lean, with a room of fat, sweaty middle-class white men from the Hollywood Press Association spurring out their equilibrium-sustaining opinions. What better consultants than these could recognise the sorts of subversive movies that have made cinema such an exciting medium? Recent nominations have included the appallingly brash Burlesque (starring Cher and Christina Aguilera) along with deflated, uninspired drags such as The Tourist and Despicable Me.

Under-representation of 'other' races is a key topic of conversation during awards season, especially seeing as since 1990, out of the 12 black actors to have been nominated for an Academy Award, nine of those were for roles in biopics. It seems that acknowledgment only occurs for those actors portraying real-life political figures such as Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X and Idi Amin, all of whom wouldn't be too happy with this under-appreciation. The lack of a single non-white nomination in the Actor, Writer or Director categories at this year's Oscars and Baftas helps to cement this inequality, and the lack of effort made to readdress this imbalance suggests that there may still be a racist undercurrent within the studios themselves.

There are well-known award-winning formulas that studios tend to conform to in an effort to please the awards judges and release dates normally fall just before nominations are announced to guarantee recognition. The success of films such as Rain Man or Shakespeare in Love have meant judges often reward actors playing English nobility, disabled characters or those who star in holocaust-based tragedies, resulting in a boringly predictable awards season this year with The King's Speech set to clean up at all the ceremonies.

The concept of award ceremonies in themselves is absurd. Independent filmmakers are often instantly alienated, as a wide distribution is required for judges to see the films and give them a majority lead in the voting process, meaning those that are seen by more people are more likely to win, as long as their quality correlates in some way to the voters' expectations. In this respect, commercialism dressed up as possessing artistic merit is rewarded, and those films which may be attempting to say something wholly unique but have more of a niche appeal are largely ignored.

The tags 'Oscar-nominated' and 'Oscar winner' have become synonymous with 'guaranteed financial gain' as advertisers exploit attempts at recognising filmmaker's achievements in order to increase box office revenue. Missing out on a nomination can often lead to the financial death of a film that is relying on such an honour to persuade people to invest time and money in watching something they may not necessarily want to see otherwise. Investors in the early stage of production are often reluctant to invest in films that don't carry awards appeal for this very reason.

Despite my many reservations concerning how necessary and ethical these awards nights are, I can't help but be overcome by a child-like enthusiasm at the prospect of finding out this year's winners. Many a lone night has been spent streaming the Oscars on an illegal pixelated Arabic website, like some sort of cinematic junkie awaiting the next fix of Hollywood self-celebratory crack. Each ceremony is orchestrated with such gloss and to-the-minute precision that it's impossible not to be overwhelmed by the glamour of it all, allowing you to conveniently forget how racist, stagnant and pointless the whole thing is.

PRIMAL CASTINGS: EMMANUELLE ESCOURROU.

As quantity dilutes quality in this ever increasingly battered art form called Cinema - which serves more peripheral interests than any other - there is one aspect that tends to bring a comfort of sorts.

Believing in a character, whatever the scenario or type of production, has long proved to be the key element to the success of a film. If that fails, everything else becomes superfluous. That is, if you are setting out to deal with human emotions, interactions or psychology in a semblance of a story or traditional narrative.

Casting is therefore the side of filmmaking that relies less on technical knowledge and more on instinct. It's when you place your trust in the skills of another human being whom you hope has the ability to be, precisely or paradoxically, a true human being within a fictional world. Yet, once in a while, an added dimension to a successful casting hits you like a sledgehammer; when you have the sense that, in every respect, no one else could have played that character.

This was never more the case than with Emmanuelle Escourrou in the French cult horror flick Baby Blood (1990). In this gory low-budget piece, Escourrou plays Yanka, a young woman who becomes the host to a creature whose cravings for blood propel her into a killing spree. The film's episodic structure is deceptively simple, allowing us to keep track of the fleeing Yanka throughout the gestation period, but it's made extremely effective by means of Escourrou's presence. The portrayal of her transformation from ingénue circus performer at the mercy of predatory men into a murdering fiend who, despite destitution, is liberated from an otherwise oppressive world is remarkable.

Her early unkemptness mirrors the rudimentary touches that populate the film, whilst the sight of her as a heavily pregnant murderer covered in her victims' blood is as grotesque as it gets. There's something intensely primal about Escourrou's physical appearance - a quality which prompts a very basic animal response of unease and that is cleverly highlighted in the attention that the camera gives to her body. Whilst some would see this as a sign of a very male perspective, others would recognise that a film of such contours, in which a distressed woman overcomes fear within extreme scenarios, is the ultimate feminist statement. She is certainly objectified throughout, but that goes hand in hand with the nature of the plot. It is as intrinsically coherent with the tone as the (inner) dialogue the creature growing inside establishes with her.

But more importantly, Baby Blood expresses deep-seated male anxieties about pregnancy and female sexuality. It would make no sense for a film that formulates such an extreme metaphor to become apologetic or too gender conscious, and the fact that Emmanuelle Escourrou embodies those fears with such natural freedom explains why, 18 years after its making, she was to revisit her character in a sequel.

It could be said that Lady Blood (2008) does take the much reclaimed female perspective. After all, it's based on an original idea by Escourrou herself and she co-wrote the script. But where the original showed 'vision overcoming lack of resources', this higher-budget sequel reveals itself to be very poor in most respects.

Escourrou's concept of having Yanka as a character who's now fully re-integrated into society, but who is gradually pulled back into the carnivorous, blood-soaked world of the creature by means of their earlier connection is a solid template for a film. Yet the extremely poor direction, uneven pace and tacky characterisation compromise everything. Despite the confidence and knowledge of her own character, Escourrou seems lost and under-valued in scenes that are badly covered in visual terms, despite qualifying to the eyes of some as stylish. It reminded me of the various short films that you would see up until recently, which - having attained resources through funding of thousands of pounds - still denote a complete lack of cinematic discernment.

The more mature Escourrou now carries a particular kind of wisdom, though. Such wisdom is no less disturbing or rooted in a primitive darkness of the human soul than her earlier screen presence. Her dark eyes communicate the long-forgotten moment in which we evolved from natural animals into beings that were tampered with by less than benign forces.

These are the eyes that I feel utterly privileged to have cast in my most recent project, as Emmanuelle Escourrou will have a special appearance in the pilot episode of my long-nurtured web series Where Her Dreams End. Escourrou had been an admirer of my work for some time and as an actress who, like any other, has had to be involved in many average projects, leapt at the opportunity to be part of something as groundbreaking as we're all intending this project to be.

Whilst I retain my right to keep a veil of secrecy over the contents of the series, Where Her Dreams End actually evolved from a short film I made last year. Its concept - of two women who had been each other's imaginary friend from childhood meeting in a dream - is now the starting point of something bigger, more ambitious, but still 100% character-driven.

Having attained enough support to get a pilot episode into production, we are intent on releasing something that takes a very personal approach to themes that are often taken for granted, all in a truly independent fashion - without the interference of the broadcasting mammoths, for example.

I am writing this prose after a week of intensive auditions to fulfil a key role in this project. That's a tiring process which has as much of the exhilarating as it does of the frustrating. I have the satisfaction of having followed my instinct and I feel confident to have found the right individual, but only time will tell. By the time this goes to print, I will be directing Emmanuelle Escourrou, amongst others, in a brand new creative challenge. I expect to resume my Now Then duties in two months' time...

The pilot episode of Where Her Dreams End will be available online from April at whereherdreamsend.blogspot.com.

JOÃO PAULO SIMÕES IS A PORTUGUESE FILMMAKER LIVING AND WORKING INDEPENDENTLY IN SHEFFIELD - HIS WORKS INCLUDE ANTLERS OF REASON AND AN ARRAY OF MUSIC VIDEOS AND DOCUMENTARIES: CAPTURAFILMES.BLOGSPOT.COM



GALVANIZE. **24TH MARCH – 24TH APRIL.** **0114 273 4427.** **GALVANIZEFESTIVAL.COM**

For those of you unaware of Galvanize Sheffield, read on and be enlightened. Galvanize is in its fourth year of existence and as a festival of contemporary metal work is quite possibly the most poignant event to grace our streets. Running between 24th March and 24th April, the festival has programmed hundreds of events from workshops to exhibitions to lectures, and a large portion of them are free to the public. If you are interested in the arts or fascinated by Sheffield's industrial heritage and creative present, this is the festival for you.

You'll see from our back cover map that Galvanize venues are uniquely marked on it so you can find them a bit easier. We strongly recommend you check out the rather beautiful accompanying brochure (distributed by our very own Opus Distribution) which you'll find in a variety of hotspots, cafes, bars, libraries and shops.

Sheffield is a city synonymous with steel and the metal trades. Famed for its production of steel and the heavy engineering that shaped fine cutlery across the world, it is a city of endeavour, creativity and craftsmanship. Metal skills can still be seen in our thriving community of silversmiths and designers, some of the best in the UK, who create beautiful and innovative contemporary designs in metal. Galvanize is a celebration of their work and the dynamic development of industry and research in Sheffield.

In addition to programming the festival and providing the public with such a feast of potential activity, Galvanize Festival is very busy working on an audit of traditional metal skills in the city in partnership with Sheffield City Council and the Heritage Crafts Association, to identify skills and ensure that they are being passed on to future generations. If you'd like to get involved in this, please use the contact details above.

Now Then's top tips for Galvanize Festival
(all of these are free entry as well, so no excuses):

23rd March – 24th April – Interchange at the Butchers Works Gallery.

24th March – 20th April – Beneath the Skin Exhibition at Sheffield Institute of Arts Gallery.

25th March – 24th April – Pewter Live at Sheffield Cathedral.

16th April – Designer Demonstrations at Persistence Works, 10.30am – 12.30pm.

20th April – In Permanent at Bank Street Arts.

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THE HARLEQUIN. **108 NURSERY STREET.** **S3 8GG.** **0114 275 8195.**

Continuing with our celebration of proper pubs and proper ales, this month we find ourselves down at the lovely Harlequin and, as it turns out, we couldn't have timed it better, as this March will see the first anniversary at the helm for proud owners Pete and Liz.

The Harlequin is a building dripping with both history and character, having sat comfortably by the river between the Wicker and Kelham Island since the early 1830s, so the team are extra keen to carry on such a proud tradition, with no corners cut and a thirst for quality in all they do.

The bar itself is home to a rotating selection of 14 hand-pulled real ales, a wide range of real ciders, as well as rare American craft ales (a real treat for the discerning pallet), with the ales on offer covering all bases for both taste and strength.

There is also a strong focus on the ethical and local sourcing of food and drink, with a seasonally determined menu boasting fresh local meats and fish available every lunchtime, along with a proper traditional roast dinner served every Sunday between 12 and 5. The double fried chips are surely worth a visit alone.

Though not exclusively tied to the Brew Company – a Sheffield brewing treasure – Pete owns the brewery and we were nothing short of giddy to hear the now ever-familiar story of camaraderie and teamwork that is intrinsic to the independent Sheffield brewing trade. The Brew Company are responsible for many local pubs' guest ales, including the Riverside (cracking place), the famous Devonshire Cat and the relative newcomer the York, as well as making sure that it shares its beers with other local breweries in exchange for theirs – again, keeping that footprint as small as possible.

Pooling resources to create the best drinking environments across the city is what sets the true independents apart, with no 'competitors' – only friends. We think this quote, heard in this very pub from an anonymous punter on his way out of the door, says it perfectly; "It's not about getting the biggest slice, it's about making a bigger cake...". Agreed.

RAGE AGAINST THE LIB-DEMS. **12TH MARCH.** **DEVONSHIRE GREEN & CITY CENTRE.**

On Saturday 12th March, the Lib-Dem conference is due to take place in Sheffield. We don't need to tell you this is fairly big news – one of the biggest conferences of its kind to take place here and at such a crucial moment. Protesters will be meeting at 11am on Devonshire Green, before marching through the city centre. Groups involved will include the Anti-Cuts Alliance, the Green Party, the National Union of Miners, Unite and Sheffield NUT. Get down there and make your opinion known.

HALLAM UNIVERSITY STUDENT EXHIBITIONS. **FLAIR – HUBS, 6 PATERNOSTER ROW.** **C.I.O.R.H – A.P.G, 16-20 SIDNEY ST.** **BUY ONE GET NONE FREE – SHOWROOM CINEMA.**

March, it would appear, is the month that all the creative juices that have been brewing in the hearts and minds of the students of Sheffield Hallam University come bursting forth in the form of a selection of exhibitions, with three in particular we think you'd be mad to miss.

The Hubs boast a space perfectly suited to the use that Katy Weston et al have in mind, which is to open it up to Hallam's creative disciplines one and all. Be it fine art, design, jewellery making, metalwork or fashion design, the theme of the Flair exhibition is simple at its core: creating things. The doors are open to the public from 15th to 18th March and both communication and interaction are very much encouraged.

From 19th to 23rd, A.P.G Works will play host to a group of Fine Art students looking to open up our perceptions of tradition, with nostalgic photography, historical rhetoric and dark visual arts all contributing. This tardis-like venue is an excellent space for the very different styles and approaches within the group to mingle and add to each other, with the whole of the upstairs area devoted to the exhibition. Credit and support are deserved for such an ambitious and intriguing debut public show.

The delightful Showroom Cinema is the venue for another exhibition which has been organised for the public by a group of fellow Hallam alumni, this time centred around the subject of consumerism. Buy One Get None Free is an exploration of the issues and agendas of trade and consumerism in modern society, posing the questions, "What do we buy, Why do we buy? Is consumerism the new religion?" Perhaps a question more pertinent now than ever before. For more info visit <http://on.fb.me/gxr4GS>

We shall naturally be in attendance for all three. See you there.

FAVOURITES.

OUR PICK OF THE BUNCH.

SHARROW LANTERN CARNIVAL. **3RD APRIL.** **MOUNT PLEASANT PARK & LONDON ROAD.** **CREATIVEACTION.NET**

Sheffield's famous Sharrow Lantern Carnival returns! This year it will take place on Sunday 3rd April from 7pm, starting in Mount Pleasant Park, with a grand finale in the General Cemetery. Once again it will present a brilliant opportunity to get creative, with the 2011 theme of the elements providing lantern makers with two different takes on the idea. Whether you choose the scientific or spiritual approach to the theme, the carnival is sure to astound with a magical array of homemade creations and local entertainment.

For anyone wanting to try their hand at making a lantern, open workshops take place every Saturday between 12pm and 4pm at Sharrow Old Junior School on South View Road and the Highfield Trinity Church on London Road. No experience is required, it's free and all ages are welcome.

HAPPY DAYS DINER. **THE HARLEY.** **THEHARLEY.CO.UK**

Big things are happening at The Harley. Big meaty things. They've recently released the new Happy Days Diner menu and gone all Fonzie on us. With a splash of 50s decor and, even better, vintage sized prices, get thee to The Harley for burger heaven. With no less than 14 varieties, each named after an icon of the times, including veggie options and none at more than £4.50, there's every reason to get stuck in. Elvis burger all the way! If that American classic isn't what you fancy there are veg and meat platters that certainly come in a classically American portion. Finish off with pancakes, sundaes and some frankly awesome milkshakes and we defy you to keep those trousers buttoned all the way.

NO LIMITS FILM FESTIVAL. **2ND AND 3RD APRIL.** **NOLIMITSFILMFESTIVAL.COM**

No Limits is the UK's biggest student-run film festival. Last year it attracted 127 submissions from 14 different countries, and this year it is set to be an even bigger affair, with a family-friendly outdoor screening in Endcliffe Park, an evening lock-in of the most extreme films of the festival, networking events, talks from industry professionals and screenings of all submissions for 2011. Plus it's not-for-profit and half of its earnings go to Art in the Park. Done.

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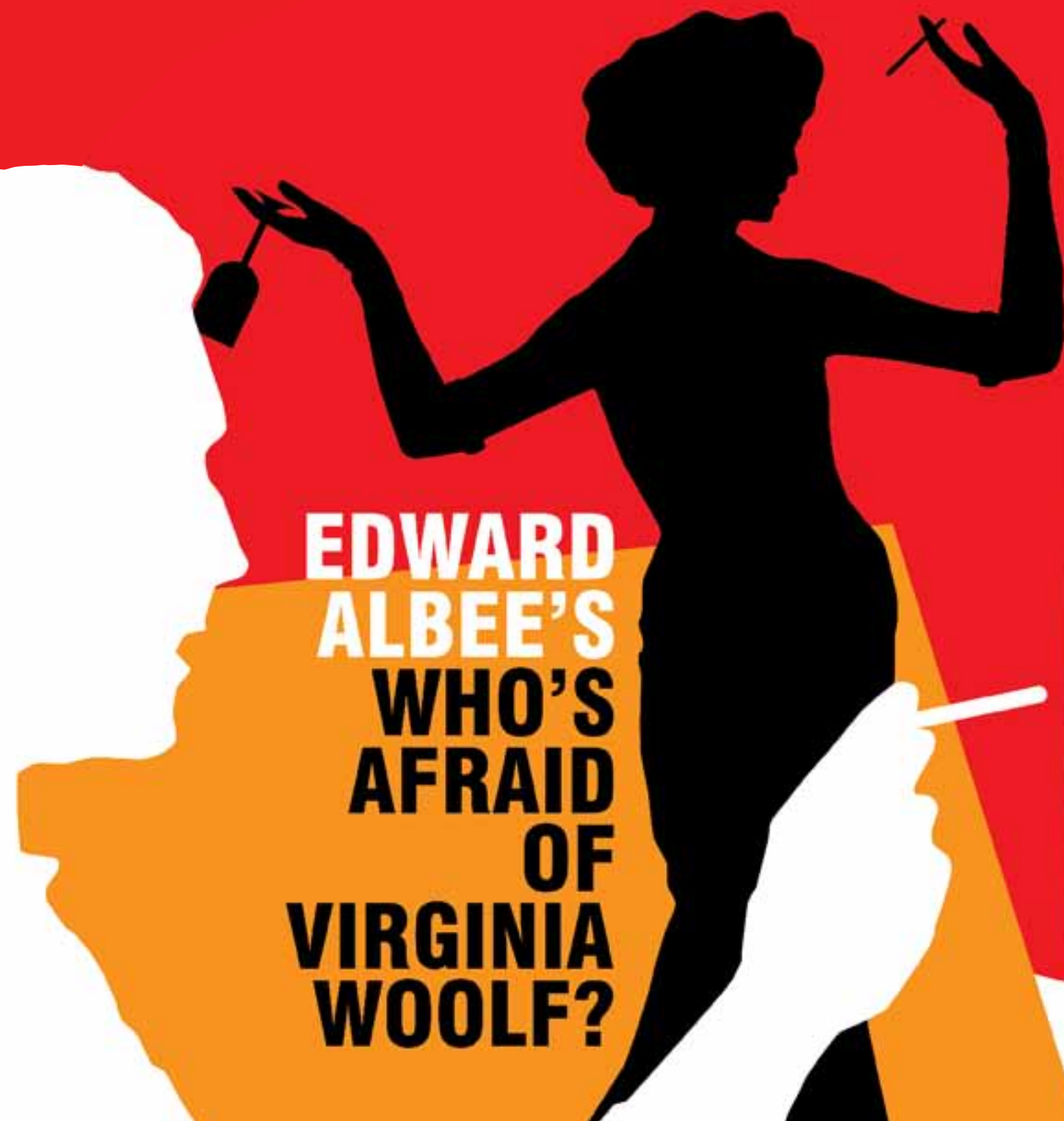
END.

YOU HEARD.

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1. GREEN TOP CIRCUS
2. THE MILESTONE
3. KELHAM ISLAND MUSEUM
4. ERNEST WRIGHT & SON
5. SHEFFIELD ASSAY OFFICE
6. CLUB 60
7. THE RISING SUN
8. THE HARLEQUIN

CITY CENTRE

9. SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY
10. THE HARLEY
11. BEG, BORROW OR STEAL
12. DQ
13. CORPORATION / DUBCENTRAL
14. PLUG
15. CITY HALL (PROTEST)
16. SHEFFIELD TOWN HALL
17. THE WINTER GARDEN
18. MILLENIUM GALLERY
19. CENTRAL LIBRARY
20. SHEFFIELD THEATRES
21. MERCURY CABS
22. BANK ST. ARTS
23. SHEFFIELD CATHEDRAL
24. CUTLERS HALL
25. BUTCHER WORKS
26. SIA GALLERY
27. HALLAM HUBS
28. THE SHOWROOM / B.O.G.N.F.
29. PERSISTENCE WORKS
30. RUTLAND ARMS / A.P.G WORKS
31. SCOTIA WORKS / ETHICAL PROPERTIES

ECCLESALL ROAD

32. KUJI
33. FAMOUS SHEFFIELD SHOP

SHARROW VALE ROAD

34. PORTER BOOKS

LONDON ROAD

35. CAFE EURO
36. PORTLAND WORKS
37. ABBEYDALE BREWERY

NETHEREDGE

38. S7 ELECTRICAL
39. THE OLD SWEET SHOP

